

## **Vitalism's Roots in Chiropractic: Should Vitalism Be a Subject of Study by Modern-day Chiropractic? Part II**

In my last article (November 4th issue) I pointed out from my perspective as a college professor that we need a better understanding of vitalism's roots and its role in chiropractic. It is important to know whether or not vitalism is a dead theory. If so, then it has no place in modern day chiropractic. However, many argue that vitalism is a viable approach to health, and the need is greater than ever to expand vitalism within the chiropractic community.

From this opening salvo, I offer a challenge to my fellow clinicians, college administrators, curriculum planners and fellow educators all across this profession. We need to openly discuss vitalism and explore ways to teach its use in the clinical setting.

Judging from the "official position papers" of many chiropractic colleges, including my scientifically oriented alma mater LACC, vitalism is not dead. I doubt that any chiropractic college takes the position that vitalism is dead.

However, vitalism is not quite alive either. It exists in a peculiar limbo. The trouble is that vitalism exists mainly in the form of internal documents, position papers, and gets a passing mention in a few text books. In my view of things, chiropractic stores its vitalism in the proverbial closet. Is it time to take it out?

Oh yes, vitalism is taught about in the colleges. But this is a problem too. We teach about vitalism, but we do not teach vitalism. As an educator I find this odd.

Chiropractic claims to be about natural healing. Our emphasis is on activating the natural healing mechanisms of the body in a way that does not use drugs or surgery. How can we stake this claim without being well versed in the form of healing which is most closely attached to the idea of natural healing (vitalism)?

I do not claim to know the answers. But I am a careful observer. I see division within the profession; I see ambiguity and hesitancy in the colleges; I see gratuitous dialogue in the classroom; and worst of all, I see dissension and anguish in the students. Is vitalism something to be ashamed of or proud of?

I dare say that if I were to gather a group of 10 chiropractors together and ask them for their definition of vitalism I would get 15 definitions. Then, if I were to ask them how they use vitalistic principles to assist their patients in getting well I would get techniques ranging from some sort of access to God's will, innate intelligence, homeostasis, clean living, good diet, healthy attitude, etc. I further say some chiropractors within this group would even offer that vitalism has no place in the treating room.

The challenge is declared. Who will respond?

With each article I encourage you to write the questions you may have, commentaries on patient care, or thoughts to share with your colleagues, to me at the following address. Please include your return address.

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