

Letter to Rush Limbaugh

Chester Wilk, DC

Dear Rush:

I'd like to give you some facts about the chiropractic profession not commonly known and its approach to excellence in health care. I'd also like to offer my criticism of the current health care system as being inappropriately utilized, inflationary, and often bordering on fraud by exclusion. While some reform may be indicated, moving toward socialism is not the answer. We need honest and objective utilization of all state licensed health care professions based on proven merit. Sadly, this is lacking.

I've been a chiropractor since 1952, and have witnessed much of the medical prejudice and hostilities directed at the chiropractic profession, a fact not broadly understood by the American public. Fortunately this phenomenon is now getting mainstream media attention with the publication of *The Serpent on the Staff: The Unhealthy Politics of the American Medical Association* by Howard Wolinsky and Tom Brune of the Chicago Sun-Times.

But this letter does not address the AMA's age old battle against chiropractic, but instead focuses on how the chiropractic profession has dealt with these problems through the years.

The chiropractic profession is a minority group in every sense of the word. The prevailing attitude of chiropractic leadership has always been toward urging its members to be the very best they can be, to lead by example and show our worth as health care providers. We have been very tolerant of the hostilities of outside vested interest groups who have often unfairly categorized us. Indeed, we have kept a critical eye on ourselves to better our profession.

As far back as I can remember our leaders have urged chiropractors to financially support their colleges and research endeavors. We survive in these areas by our own efforts, unlike the medical schools. In 1992, the National Institutes of Health gave the top ten medical schools \$1,424,427,000 to subsidize their research activities. The NIH also gave hundreds of millions more to lesser medical colleges. That same year, chiropractic made the front page news in the chiropractic publication, *Dynamic Chiropractic*, when the Department of Veterans Affairs approved a \$48,495 pilot study at a chiropractic college, the first federally funded research project at a chiropractic college (National College of Chiropractic in Lombard, Illinois). So while Harvard was receiving \$339,533,872 from the NIH in 1992, and a less notable institution such as the Oregon Health Sciences University was getting \$23,339,389, chiropractic's grand total of federal research dollars was \$48,495.

It seems that my profession's "soft" policy vis-a-vis our critics is based on fair play. We, like many Americans, don't feel it's right to judge or criticize anyone based on nationality, color of skin, religion, gender, and sexual preference, yet it remains "open season" on chiropractic.

Chiropractors are responsible citizens. We pay our taxes, take care of our families, and provide a valuable alternate health care that has been deemed "superior" by independent government

commissions. Because our care doesn't cause iatrogenic reactions, we have the lowest malpractice insurance rates of health professionals in the world, based on independent actuarial studies.

As you live in New York, I invite you to see the New York College of Chiropractic (NYCC). It is a magnificent 253 acre campus located in Seneca Falls, just west of Syracuse. It is just one of the many fine chiropractic colleges nationally accredited by the Council on Chiropractic Education under the United States Office of Education. Should you care to visit NYCC, you would be impressed with the classrooms, laboratories, research center, outpatient clinic, library, administrative building, dormitories, all furnished with the finest equipment available, and paid for by the chiropractic profession. You will be proud, even amazed, that our profession could build such a magnificent institution without government subsidization. It is a classic example of what can be done with commitment to excellence, personal sacrifice, and dedication. All of this did not come by choice, but by necessity.

World renowned author, professor, and medical orthopedist Dr. John McMillan Mennell toured one of our colleges and admirably said that some of our science departments were clearly superior to any he has seen anywhere in the world within the medical community. Accomplishing this without federal support demonstrates just how potent true commitment can be and how we can rise above any obstacles with the appropriate attitude.

Healthy competition is what makes America work and be great. If you take it away it will be a death blow to democracy. This certainly applies to health care. When the American Medical Association (AMA) committed some blatantly illegal anticompetitive acts against chiropractic, myself and three other chiropractors filed an antitrust lawsuit against the AMA and its affiliated associations. Characteristically tolerant of its adversaries, the chiropractic profession was slow to rally behind the suit, but eventually recognized the wisdom of legal action and got 100 percent behind the suit. Our case went all the way to the United States Supreme Court which upheld the lower district federal court verdict that the AMA was guilty of violating antitrust laws by engaging in a nationwide boycott of doctors of chiropractic.

Our settlement funds from the AMA are now being used to compile a chiropractic research data bank and provide financial support to our colleges. Meanwhile, many of the chiropractic colleges unselfishly donated their share of the AMA settlement to the Consortium for Chiropractic Research (CCR), an institution that pools the research resources of chiropractic. The Consortium promotes intercollegiate cooperation and dialogue on research projects, with 85 percent of its funds being spent directly on research and scholarly activities.

Enclosed with this letter you will find summaries of various government commissions, workers' compensation studies, hospital and HMO studies, and studies within leading medical centers connected with universities. They tell the story. Consider some examples:

1. An Ontario government commission (Manga Report) found that chiropractic was "superior," more therapeutically effective, cost efficient, safer and more scientifically based than medicine for back pain, and enjoyed a much higher level of patient satisfaction. It also cautioned against "untested, questionable or harmful medical treatments" and preferred chiropractic care over medical for some ailments.
2. The world renowned RAND Corporation initiated a research project sparked by the funds from

the Consortium and concluded that spinal manipulation (the kind done by chiropractors) is "appropriate." And when RAND speaks everyone within the Beltway listens, or should listen.

3. A 10-year British government study showed a 2-1 superiority of chiropractic care over medical treatment for the same conditions.
4. The New Zealand government conducted one of the most extensive evaluations of chiropractic and attested to chiropractic's safety and superiority over medical care for back ailments.
5. An Italian government study, utilizing chiropractic within 22 medical clinics, concluded that the chiropractic care reduced hospitalization by 87.6 percent and work loss by 75.5 percent.
6. Several workers' compensation studies, (e.g., Utah) showed a 1,000 percent chiropractic advantage over medical care in workers' compensation costs.
7. The largest HMO in the southeast United States showed that 12 cases medically diagnosed as needing back surgery were completely corrected by chiropractic care.
8. A prominent medical orthopedist in Chicago testified under oath how chiropractic was sending patients home well 7-9 days sooner in the hospital orthopedic ward that was using chiropractic care, over another hospital ward not using chiropractic care.
9. A medical research clinic affiliated with a prominent university conducted some clinical research projects and found that chiropractic care eliminated 87 percent of the chronic medically unresponsive cases of seven years duration, and did it within two to three weeks.
10. A blue ribbon hospital study estimates 48,000 deaths annually from unnecessary surgery.
11. A Harvard University study says that medical negligence caused 7,000 deaths in one year in New York state alone.
12. A Yale-New Haven study estimates that drug reactions each year kill 100,000 people, and hospitalize one and one-half million.
13. There were 80,000 unnecessary back operations done in 1991, according to the CBS "Morning Show."

These facts are not given here to bash the honorable medical profession or promote one health care method over another, but to encourage closer interprofessional cooperation and to utilize reasonable, objective and honest health care. It is plainly not happening in this country.

You can appreciate why I stand so tall and justifiably proud when I tell people that I am a chiropractor. Our profession's record speaks for itself. I only wish I could have the same pride when I look at the foolish direction I see this country going in health care. Your insight, wisdom, communicative skills, and courage to "tell it like it is" is much needed, Rush, and I wonder if you have even given chiropractic any thought in this issue. The chiropractic profession should serve as a beacon for other minority groups to try to emulate. What a far better situation we'd have in America if they did.

Our profession needs someone like you who deeply and compassionately cares about the direction our nation is going on health care and can bring out the vital role that must be played by all state-licensed professions, including chiropractors. Since you are a champion of the truth, and I understand that you may have had a positive experience with chiropractic, would you consider telling your audience the benefits of chiropractic care?

I realize that you evaluate all sides of an issue. Please contact me and I will be pleased to send you background documentation.

I have appeared on hundreds of talk shows, including Ted Koppel's "Nightline," and will be appearing on many more talk shows when my new book is released by a publisher in your state. I look forward to hearing from you on this vital matter. Meanwhile, I'm enclosing documentation on the studies numbered in my letter for your reference.

Sincerely,

Chester Wilk, DC
Chicago, Illinois

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