

Three Times as Many, Half as Often

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By now, the overall trend in health care reform should be abundantly clear:

Reduce care to the least expensive, most conservative treatment level that is still effective.

Cost efficiency is a major issue, but chiropractic's lack of data proving its effectiveness makes efficiency calculations rather elusive. The challenge is to take a society that has been encouraged to "ask your doctor," and regulate and restrict access to avert unnecessary treatment.

This issue was underscored in a recent article about the government operated health care system in Ontario, Canada in the Wall Street Journal (February 22, 1994):

Ontario Asks Its Residents Not to Go to the Doctor

Ontario's socialized health care system has a new prescription for patients with a cold or flu, don't bother your doctor, eat chicken soup. Ontario residents get free medical coverage. But officials complain that frequent snifflers go to the doctor too often, clogging up the health care system. The cost for all this "clogging-up" is about 200 million Canadian dollars (\$148 million US).

The government is going so far as to test an advertising campaign to reduce doctor visits. Brochures were also mailed out extolling the virtues of chicken soup, mustard, vinegar, and pepper among other foods in lieu of a doctor visit.

The good news is that chiropractic is not an expensive, high-risk procedure. The bad news is that health care reform will encourage and enforce limitations on care. Only treatments that are justified as "necessary" will be approved and reimbursed.

So what does this mean to you?

How can you modify your practice to meet the challenges of health care reform?

What is "the practice of the future"?

There is no shortage of consultants ready to tell you how to survive health care reform. But the answers to these and many other questions are not yet forthcoming, and there is a serious lack of consensus as to which practice path a DC should take. Some chiropractors encourage a strictly cash-based practice, others brag that their "retention rate was 87 visits."

There is at least one aspect of health care reform you should be thinking about. Consider your practice three years ago. According to the ACA's most recent survey, on an average, DCs have a patient base of

72.6 different patients per week. This number is on the rise. But DCs only saw an average of 6.9 new patients that week, down from 7.5 the year before.

The current direction of health care reform will put further pressure on your average number of visits per patient. You are probably already seeing fewer patient visits as compared with previous years. This leaves only one alternative -- see more patients, but less often.

Whatever your patient base is now, you will need to greatly increase it in the near future. Depending on your practice mix, you may even need to double your patient base. You will want to reactivate the people you haven't seen in a while, and do everything you can to attract new patients. New patients will be your life-blood throughout health care reform. Referrals and "virgin backs" (patients new to chiropractic) are your best opportunity.

This is why it is so critical that the chiropractic profession reach those not currently utilizing chiropractic care. If every DC in the world made a major effort to enlighten one person each day about the benefits of chiropractic care, we could begin to make a dent in the estimated 87 percent of the world that still doesn't receive chiropractic care or those that don't see a chiropractor on a regular basis.

This is also why the marketing campaign of the Chiropractic Centennial Foundation (CCF) comes at such a critical time. This is why every DC who is the least bit affected or concerned by health care reform should become a Centennial sponsor.

The money donated by sponsors is part of the largest marketing campaign this profession has ever embarked upon. But we still need your help.

In less than six months, chiropractic's float in the Tournament of Roses Parade will pass by television cameras, creating awareness of this profession to over 400 million people in 90 countries. But, this will only be a one-time event!

To date, we have raised less than \$2 million for the Centennial. The \$5.5 million target is for a full year of marketing, media and public relations. If every DC would become a \$500 sponsor, we could exceed that budget and reach a much greater portion of the public.

But of course, that is up to you.

If you haven't done so already, please call, toll free, 1-800 635-8188 and make a commitment to the future of chiropractic and your own practice.

Your donation doesn't have to be huge, it just needs to be from your heart.

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