

# Dynamic Chiropractic

CHIROPRACTIC (GENERAL)

## "20/20"

Richard Tyler, DC

The phone rang and the person on the other end told me that the well-known TV news magazine "20/20" had decided to do a story on chiropractic. It seems that the recent spasm of news regarding the favorable study by the RAND researchers on the efficacy of chiropractic therapy had caught their eye and they wanted to do an "objective" evaluation of our profession. Sounds good, huh?

After years of distorted media garbage about chiropractic, I quite logically winced at the news. This time, I was assured, things would be different. They were going into the schools, interviewing the students and faculty at both LACC and National College. Cameras would go into the classrooms and clinics. The world would at long last see the sophistication of the teaching processes indigenous to our profession. They would see all the bright young men and women studying in modern facilities on beautiful campuses and learn of the arduous process required to become a chiropractic physician.

For a moment I weakened. Maybe this time things would be different. After all, chiropractic has been around for almost a century. Maybe the media was beginning to wise up that we're here to stay so it might be a good idea to inform the public just what we're all about.

Another good thing was that the story would be aired shortly after it was filmed. This meant to me that there wouldn't be much time for the AMA and their propagandist goon squads to mess with the report. The longer it took to get on, the more ominous it would be as far as objectivity was concerned.

Dr. Lou Sportelli was the architect of the program. He took time from his practice to orchestrate what could have been a ringing tribute to our profession and should be commended for his efforts on our behalf. To allay my fears of a ringing condemnation, he was kind enough to send me rather detailed correspondence between himself and the production staff. Dr. Sportelli assured me it was but a small portion of the correspondence, but even so it detailed the plethora of positive information the producer, Roger Sergel, and his production staff had to work with.

Still, this was the producer who condescendingly stated at the outset that, "There are data now to support limited use of chiropractic care as effective for a narrowly defined set of patients. Our perspective is that we're not going to dismiss something just because it isn't well-liked. We will review chiropractic as we have a number of medical procedures. All stories are looked at carefully. We have applied the same standards of quality as we do with anything." Well, now isn't that just dandy. With that statement as a starting point, one could only hope the right kind of information might dislodge some of his prejudiced concepts. "Well liked"? By whom, Roger? The AMA? "Narrowly defined set of patients?" For a form of therapy dating back before Hippocrates and which acts as the founding concept for not only chiropractic but a recognized branch of medicine called osteopathy? Both disciplines started not to merely treat backaches but the individual's overall health through the somatovisceral reflex.

My other concern was the fact that the AMA's resident medical "expert" for ABC, Timothy Johnson,

was to have a hand in the proceedings. Still, we were assured objectivity.

The days dragged by and suddenly the segment that was planned for early November was now being shown in late February of the following year.

One can only imagine the horror at AMA headquarters when they viewed some of the footage from the chiropractic colleges showing bright-looking young men and women in classes surrounded by modern equipment with articulate instructors. No, never! The public must never get the hint that chiropractors do anything more than take correspondence courses for their "degree."

Scurry, scurry -- worry, worry. The whole thing must be scrapped. Sure, they would show chiropractors in a more or less favorable light, as long as the chiros in that light "knew their places."

The result was an arrogant piece of medical garbage in which they, the medical profession (the self-appointed judges of all health matters), pompously condemned and blessed what was in their best self-interest.

Not a frame taken in the classrooms was shown. Not a frame from the hospitals. Not a single reference to chiropractic education was made with the exception of some historic footage of the Palmer School which looked as if it were taken back before the invention of the electric light. And the narration, while it was being shown, went on to tell how the Iowa Medical Society considered B.J. the most dangerous man in the state, not in prison. So much for the schooling of a chiropractor. So much for the vaunted objectivity of the Sergel/Johnson team.

One of the most unfortunate aspects of the segment was the chiropractor they focused on. She was an athlete who sees well over 100 patients a day. When you see that many you are no longer a doctor but a technician. And she "knew her place," all right. Her interview was interspersed throughout the segment with such comments that most chiropractors consider themselves second class citizens in the healing arts and that she had a "desperate need" for the counsel and referrals of the MDs.

What crap. Maybe I'm wrong, but I thought chiropractic was founded as an alternative to medical madness, not a prescription item. Instead, the public was treated to watching a medical doctor giving an orthopedic examination before he decided to refer to the supposedly "desperate" chiropractor.

The chiropractor then went on to assure one and all that she didn't treat diseases, just backaches. No cancer, diabetes or asthma for her -- she knew her place as a back-cracking technician. What a pity. Apparently, she chooses not to investigate the research, both past and present, on the somatovisceral, viscerosomatic reflexes being continued by both the osteopathic medical and chiropractic professions. What a pity that she hasn't felt the thrill of adjusting an asthmatic while having an attack as I have, and the feeling the breath of life returning into the patient's lungs. But then she might not have the time to see her quota of over 100 patients every practice day.

Remember, she finds a "desperate need" for referrals, and we are being judged before the public by a profession that:

1. a Yale University study estimates kills approximately 2,000 Americans every week with prescription drugs;
2. a Blue Ribbon Medical Commission study estimates kills another thousand every week with

failed surgery;

3. admits that 85 percent of its interventions are not supported by solid scientific evidence;
4. admits that only one percent of the articles in its medical journals are scientifically sound;
5. admits that most of its diagnoses are wrong, and two-thirds of the medication it prescribes is worthless;
6. the federal government estimates causes 6 million adverse drug reactions in this country every year, with about half of these needing hospitalization; and
7. a recent Harvard University study estimates kills approximately 80,000 Americans in its hospitals every year.

If the chiropractic profession admitted to any one of the preceding, they would have wanted posters out on us, and we would be tracked down by bounty hunters. Yes, this is the same profession that has the nerve to judge anything -- much less us.

At the end of this unfortunate bit of medical propaganda, our friend, Dr. Tim, gives the public the parting AMA message: Okay, go to a chiropractor if you must, but only for a sudden minor back pain, no disc problems please. And never, no never go to chiropractors who say that they might affect the overall health of the patient through adjustments or nutrition -- this from a character who has never studied either discipline. And, as the cherry on top of this bit of medical confection, Jack Paar's old sidekick, Hugh Downs, nods and assures America that he'll do only as Dr. Tim and his profession advises.

The winners in all this? The medical profession who once again demonstrated its ability to control any chance of honest expression through the media and the chiropractic technician who is probably fighting off all those who want to go to her after the exposure she got for knowing her place. And, of course, all those in the profession who become giddy when someone condescends to use our name in any way.

Actually it could have been worse; they could have explored our scamy underbelly of neon lights and freebies. So, with a collective sigh of relief we can go back to work improving the health of our patients by adjusting their spines, secure in the knowledge that the Sergel/Johnson team will probably leave us alone without applying the "standards" of "20/20" as long as we don't make any unacceptable research or therapeutic noises.

*RHT*

