

# CBS Puts Chiropractic in the National Spotlight

Steve Kelly, managing editor

On Thursday morning November 12, as many of us were having our morning coffee, "CBS This Morning" presented chiropractic in a national four-minute segment as part of its week-long television series "Conquering Back Pain," a look at nonsurgical options.

Representing the chiropractic profession was Robert Poteete, D.C., president of the Ohio State Chiropractic Association (OSCA), with Bob Arnot, M.D. as the CBS medical correspondent.

If you didn't catch the show, you missed a very positive and balanced look at chiropractic.

Dr. Arnot began his report by commenting that "Conquering Back Pain" had thus far looked at "high tech" approaches to relieving back pain. He then asks: "What do real people do in the heartland when they have back pain? Well, they go to their chiropractor," he replies.

While Dr. Arnot speaks, we see Dr. Poteete working with patients:

Fade to pregnant patient: "I can't live without my chiropractor," says the mother-to-be.

Dr. Arnot: "Chiropractic treatments are by far the most popular alternative for those suffering from back pain. After doctors<sup>1</sup> and dentists, chiropractors have become the third largest group of health professionals in the country. Worried about safety? Even this pregnant woman doesn't give chiropractic treatment a second thought about her back pain.

"But it's only recently that chiropractors have enjoyed this kind of respect. For years, medical doctors looked at them as second-class citizens,<sup>2</sup> even quacks.<sup>3</sup> Until a 1990 court ruling found the American Medical Association guilty of conspiracy to restrain trade, the AMA boycotted chiropractors. Since that ruling, there's been substantial thawing in the relationship between doctors and chiropractors."

Fade to second woman patient receiving a cervical adjustment: "I love it when you do my neck."

Dr. Arnot: "The biggest surprise: Studies reported by the American College of Physicians and the RAND Corporation<sup>4</sup> show what patents have known for decades -- chiropractic treatment works for bad backs, especially if the pain is acute and caused by muscle strain."

Third woman patient: "Prior to chiropractic care, I was on the road to possible surgery and in a back brace. It's through him (Dr. Poteete) that I really think I have the quality of life I have."

Fourth woman patient: "...and the headache and all that stress... everything is tight ... when he adjusts that, ... the pain is gone."

Fifth woman patient: "I was just in a total spasm ... so much pain and my body was shaking ... half-hour later all the pain was gone. I bowled Friday and played tennis Monday morning."

Dr. Arnot: "Chiropractic treatment is distinctly low tech, high touch."

Dr. Poteete proceeds to give Dr. Arnot a checkup, explaining what he's doing as he examines him.

Dr. Arnot: "I've got a sore back. I'm not saying where, but we'll find out."

Dr. Poteete begins to administer ROM tests and immediately notes "restriction," and "tightness" in the thoracic spine.

"That's exactly where I'm tight," Dr. Arnot confesses, explaining he overdid the roller-blading.

Dr. Poteete adjusts Dr. Arnot, telling him the manipulation will restore function and movement.

Dr. Arnot concludes the segment by asking about the safety of manipulations. Dr. Poteete replies: "When we consider the outcome studies, patient response ... chiropractic is a particularly safe treatment."

### Behind the Scenes

In preparation for "Conquering Back Pain," CBS first contacted the American Chiropractic Association to line up several DCs in southwest Ohio to appear on the program.

The ACA referred CBS Producer Andy Jones to Rick McMichael, D.C., Ohio delegate to the ACA, past president of Ohio State Chiropractic Association (OSCA), and current president of the Congress of Chiropractic State Associations (COCSA).

The OSCA has a list of 27 members who have undergone media training. When media opportunities like this arrive, OSCA is prepared. CBS contacted Drs. Steven Bleser of Cincinnati, alternate Ohio delegate to the ACA; Bret Wilson of Dayton, vice president of the OSCA; and Robert Poteete of Fairfield, current president of OSCA.

Mr. Jones spoke extensively with all three DCs and planned on filming in multiple locations. A final decision however was made to film at only one location: Fairfield, a suburb of Cincinnati.

Dr. Poteete was given two days to prepare. Mr. Jones and the CBS camera crew arrived at his office Wednesday evening to film Dr. Poteete with his patients. Dr. Poteete selected 10 patients to demonstrate a variety of conditions.

The next morning, at the unseemly hour of 5:00 a.m., the CBS crew was back in Dr. Poteete's office to film live with Bob Arnot, M.D.

Dr. Poteete was pleased with the outcome: "The entire experience was very positive. No one drudged up any negative information."

Kudos to CBS, the OSCA, and Dr. Robert Poteete.

### References

### Notes:

1. You may interpret Dr. Arnot's reference here as inferring that only MDs are "doctors." However,

Dr. Arnot does refer to Dr. Poteete as "Dr." and later, when referring to MDs, he's careful to specify "medical doctors."

2. Every time a network or local programming speaks about chiropractic, this phrase pops out. It's time to bury that sorry phrase.
3. Ditto for the "Q" word.
4. Chiropractic has certainly reaped consistent, positive national network publicity from the RAND study. While part of this media attention stems from the prestige ascribed the RAND Corporation, an aspect not to be overlooked was the wide dissemination of the RAND reports. There is a crop of new, impressive cost-effectiveness studies comparing chiropractic and medicine that are immensely more flattering for chiropractic than the findings of the RAND report (e.g., Victoria study, Utah study, and two Virginia studies), but who knows about them? It falls on chiropractors to spread the word of these studies. No one else will.

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