

Unity Appeal

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"We must hang together or we will most assuredly hang separately." Benjamin Franklin

This is an appeal for unity under one roof. I consider it the most important article I have ever written. Organizational unity is the most important issue concerning our survival and growth as a profession.

There isn't a chiropractor in the world who doesn't insist that a divided profession weakens us professionally and threatens our identity and existence, yet our actions belie our words and beliefs. Chiropractic finds itself engulfed in imaginary or "non issues" which detracts from the real issue at hand.

These distractions remind me of the western comedy "Support Your Local Gunfighter," starring James Garner as a gambler and Chuck Connors as Swifty Morgan, the fastest gun in the west. Garner faces Swifty in the town square in a shoot-out. Garner has about as much chance of beating Swifty to the draw as a college football team has of beating the San Francisco 49'ers. But Swifty gets distracted by the cunning Garner and ends up shooting himself in the foot; Swifty spends the rest of the movie trying to get out of his boots.

That's exactly what I see happening in the chiropractic profession. We have a medical opponent that wouldn't have a prayer in an honest confrontation on the issues if we were properly organized; But, we get distracted. We form duplicate organizations and waste money and energy on non-issues. As a result, we inhibit our growth and true potential in the health care field.

A major concern we face are those DCs who don't belong to an association. These DCs have no united organization, no united agenda and goals; they have little influence on legislators, insurance companies ... and little direction. All the non-members can do is lament their sorrowful state of affairs. They complain that they will not join an association unless our leadership can unite. This attitude presents a paradox: DCs need to support one of the national organizations and at the same time bring them together.

The ACA has made impressive strides: They hired a firm that specializes in revamping organizations and turning them into streamlined, modern, and efficient operations. It did this at a significant cost. The ACA hired topnotch individuals in lobbying, in governmental and professional relations, in management, in communications, and in finance. The ACA also has the able legal assistance of attorney George McAndrews.

I've had occasions to speak with the new ACA chairman, David Redding, and ACA president, Charles Downing, both sincere and dedicated men who are eager to cooperate with all reasonable parties. The ACA leadership is truly reaching out to the profession in a way I have never witnessed in my over 30 years in chiropractic. Things have never looked better. The next step is a massive membership drive.

We must support the organization which is doing the most for chiropractic, and I believe the ACA represents our best hope. However, if you believe the ICA is doing more, then join the ICA and insist on unification under one roof. Not being an association member is to give encouragement to our detractors and adversaries who would like to "contain and eliminate" us.

On the ICA side I recently had the pleasure of spending a few days in Marietta, Georgia. I had a chance to see the Life Chiropractic College and was thoroughly impressed. Dr. Sid Williams is a man who is passionately and totally dedicated to a cause. Chiropractic is his life. We can certainly appreciate and understand him. We need not agree on everything to work together, but we can build toward a common goal.

There is a serious misconception that the ACA will compromise or "sell out" the basic principle of chiropractic. Nothing is farther from the truth. I am essentially a straight chiropractor who believes that the spinal adjustment is by far the single most important tool in our practice that makes us unique from the other professions. We are spinal biomechanics and must preserve this identity at all costs. If it is lost, we are lost. The chiropractors that I speak with demand that chiropractic remain a separate and distinct profession. Now, if that isn't unity of principle, then what is?

I believe a major problem for chiropractic is what I call the "battered profession syndrome." Chiropractic has been -- and continues to be -- the victim of lies and bigotry brought on by the AMA's containment and elimination" mentality. In our efforts to overcome the adversities inflicted by the AMA, we have divided ourselves into multiple groups and, by so doing, have played into the hands of the AMA. One of the AMA's stated "prime" intents was to keep our profession divided. It has indeed been very successful. We must frustrate those efforts.

On different occasions I have gone to Washington, D.C. and visited a number of congressional offices. While speaking with legislative aides I discovered that they were familiar with the American Chiropractic Association. The other chiropractic organizations simply did not have the recognition power.

I will always be indebted to the ICA for it being the first organization to endorse the lawsuit. Many of the key ICA leaders of that time have since moved to the ACA and have already assumed leadership positions. It sure beats dropping out or forming splinter groups.

I recently spoke before a large gathering of the faculty and student body at the Life Chiropractic College. The following day I spoke to the Georgia Chiropractic Council: both groups support the ICA. The following week I spoke with three chiropractic factions from Oregon: these were ACA supporters. We discussed the issues that keep us separated and soon discovered that we really had much in common and agreed we could work together. We need serious and immediate dialog between the ICA and ACA.

If you are not a member of a national organization, then join one today. If you are a member, then take non-members to lunch and impress upon them their professional obligation to become a member. You can plead, arm twist, beg or embarrass them; do whatever you must to make them recognize the serious importance of their participation.

Let's embark on a membership drive today.

Let's stop shooting ourselves in the foot.

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MARCH 1991

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