

With the Pending Suit -- Where Do We Go From Here?

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Although most of the defendants have settled with us and we won our case against the AMA in the district court, the suit is far from finished. It is currently being appealed by the AMA and, regardless of its outcome, it will go all the way to the Supreme Court. Oral arguments were heard in the appellate court over one year ago, and we are still waiting for the outcome which has been on a daily basis for months. Meanwhile, as we await the outcome, there are two extremely important areas we can address. The first is in demanding total honesty and integrity from our members in dealing with patients. The second is to become media oriented by taking advantage of the many opportunities we have toward getting free radio, newspaper, and television coverage. Let's discuss each of these individually.

I recently had the occasion to read a report by Dr. Don Petersen of Dynamic Chiropractic concerning his bringing out negative issues within chiropractic, concerning some chiropractic conduct. I've always felt that doing so would only give the AMA and its allies more ammunition to use against us. However, it was brought out that if the information is already known to our detractors, it really can't hurt us any more than it has and serves to promote more honesty and integrity within our profession.

This does not suggest that the chiropractic profession is plagued with a great deal of dishonest practitioners. On the contrary. However, whenever an occasional occurrence does take place it tends to reflect on the entire profession, so we should always strive for the highest degree of honesty possible. Meanwhile, if the profession ignores proper conduct it becomes vulnerable to criticism by virtue of a "conspiracy of silence."

A number of years ago an insurance adjuster told me how pleased he was with the chiropractic leadership in its sincere cooperation with him whenever he had a complaint against a chiropractor. Whereas, whenever he had a complaint against an MD he noted that all he ever got was a "run-around" from the medical leadership. I'm sure we can all agree that it is very nice hearing complimentary stories about our profession, and we should strive to do everything we can to preserve and advance these kinds of situations.

It would seem that the wisest direction that our state and national leadership can take is to widely publicize to the world that it demands honesty and integrity of its members when dealing with patients. This would include sending certified letters to insurance companies, Department of Registration, the state's attorney's office, and any other state or federal department devoted to protecting the rights of patients, and assure them we will cooperate with them in every respect to see that any unscrupulous practices are punished. An unthinking person may say this is "turning brother against brother," but rather it is removing any malignancy from our profession.

I would not stop there but would make sure that every radio, TV station, and newspaper got this

information. There are three basic advantages to being as vocal about it as possible. First, it will keep the chiropractors more honest because they will know the leadership means business. Second, it represents some very good positive PR for chiropractic. Third, if an individual chiropractor commits an improper act, the media cannot criticize the chiropractic profession and, if any heat comes down, it can be against the state agencies if they are lax in their responsibility. The public needs to be aware that chiropractic organizations generally do not have the power to punish directly, but can only cooperate with those agencies that do have power. And if the agencies do not do their job, then let them get the criticism and bad press.

I don't know of a more morally corrupt attitude than the one which prevails within the AMA. It most recently refused to adopt any patient's rights policy for its dealing with patients. It bullies and intimidates congress and spends money lavishly to "buy" the support of politicians. America is the greatest industrialized nation in the world to live in -- just as long as you don't get sick in it and end up in a hospital. It has the greatest technology in the world, yet spends less than one percent of its health care dollars on figuring out the best and most cost-effective means to restore health. A federal district court said the AMA's conduct toward chiropractic "---could not be trusted beyond its next confrontation---some of its evidence was incredible and unworthy of belief---was not objectively reasonable (it's a nice way of saying its conduct was stupid)---was guilty of systematic long-term wrong doing---has never acknowledged the lawlessness of its past conduct."

I once appeared on a popular radio interview program and, during the opening remarks, the host played the role of "devil's advocate" in the conspicuous absence of any medical guest willing to appear. After I properly answered his sharp questioning, he retreated to a more neutral approach. After we got off the air he invited me to his office and we spoke for perhaps 1-1/2 hours, where he expressed his personal feelings not expressed on the air. He severely condemned the medics in no mild language for their refusing to appear on his show, while sharply criticizing him for giving me the radio exposure. He was so outraged with the medics' attack upon him that his face became flushed as he spoke about them. He held a copy of the AMA's anti-chiropractic propaganda book in his hand and then flung it against the wall with disgust and called it "trash." Yet, you would have never known it during the radio interview.

This kind of attitude is more prevalent within informed people in the media than we realize. But we have to approach them and bring it out. The lesson the AMA and its allies need to learn, but are too arrogant to realize or accept, is that you can't bully and intimidate people, demonstrate contempt for the truth, shirk your responsibilities and expect to gain the respect of intelligent people. The current mentality and attitude of the AMA and its allies will result in their digging their own graves and crawling into them, and I am sure that I and every decent-minded citizen will be happy to replace the dirt on top of them and make this a better world to live in.

There are so many positive things going for chiropractic today that, if properly presented, no objective observer can possibly deny chiropractic's benefits. Inversely, there are so many negative things happening in the medical field that, if also properly presented, will create quite a stir. However, properly put them together and they present a powerful case for closer interprofessional cooperation and place chiropractic into the main stream of health care.

Editor's Note: There has never been a more challenging and vital time in our history to become vocal on radio and television with our message. To this goal, Dr. Wilk is arranging to start some round-table

meetings in Chicago. The location has been chosen for the meetings. He will invite any and all chiropractors who feel that they would like to really do something great for their profession, while elevating themselves in the process. Once our profession can get a close-knit group of media-oriented chiropractors together, who will know how to approach the media and what to say most effectively, we can start making things happen as never before in the history of chiropractic.

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