

We Get Letters

No More Sloppy Copy

Dear Editor:

I wish to amplify Dr. Grumling's views on chiropractors' poor writing skills (Dynamic Chiropractic, May 23, 1990).

He was, in fact, too kind and too gentle in pointing out our deficiencies. The prevalent use of immature, inflammatory rhetoric; inappropriate capitalizations; and multiple question/exclamation marks (evident in both tabloids) proclaims to the world that our profession does not deserve the status we self-righteously seek.

In addition, we find hollow, self-serving logic and sneering, condescending prose and characterizations. Poor word choice and awkward sentences are not uncommon.

Some of the responsibility lies with the editors whose job it is to clean-up or reject submitted copy. However, they cannot rewrite all submissions.

I have a solution. Of the many books available on writing, two stand out as classics: *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser practices its preaching. It is a fast-reading book with clear, concise phrasing which covers the fundamentals of getting your point across effectively. *Elements of Style* by Strunk and White has a section on basic grammar and punctuation. Don't laugh; do you know how to use a semicolon? It further covers the effective use of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Word choice and sentence structure define the writer's "voice" (really, no kidding). And most chiropractors display weak voices.

Authority, clarity, and brevity -- we are professionals and deserve no less from those who would inform and influence us.

William Moser, D.C.
San Luis Obispo, California

More on America West Airlines

Dear Editor:

Re: America West Airlines' Reply in July 18, 1990 Dynamic Chiropractic, page 15:

The heading states "America West Airlines Apologizes to Chiropractic." The copy of that letter that I read in Dynamic Chiropractic is not an apology. It is an apologia, which is quite different. Mr. Shimizu is justifying the article printed in AWARE America West.

Comparing chiropractic treatment to a "shampoo and set" is not "both sides of the issue." It isn't praise vs. not praise, or even an example of legitimate criticism. The shampoo and set statement severely and seriously misrepresents the reality of chiropractic.

I suggest that if the article had slandered an MD in a similar way, it would not have passed Mr. Shimizu's editorial board.

Susan Legender Clarke, D.C.
St. Paul, Minnesota

No More Scapegoats

Dear Editor:

You have provided an impressive and necessary journalistic service by exposing the spurious aspects of PMA's percentage contracts and you have editorialized appropriately regarding this profession's national problem with self-regulation. However, "DC" and other chiropractic publications remain part of the problem with regard to a major cause of the profession-wide lack of credibility with business, labor and insurance.

You have singled out PMA as if it were a unique organization within the practice management industry. You have given away and sold high profile space to other practice builders to preach self-serving ethics sermons, allowing them to inappropriately distance themselves from PMA's current black sheep status. This approach serves only to entrench the overall practice management problem by using PMA as a scapegoat. Outside of percentage contracts there isn't a dime's worth of difference between PMA's handling of the critical subject of patient scheduling and the other major management firms, to include the affable Chuck Gibson.

For too large of a percentage of the profession, the clinical standard of practice in chiropractic was established by Jim Parker in the mid-fifties and has been embellished ever since by consultants he has spawned. Second only to inherent anti-chiropractic bias which has always been a common denominator, it is routine, long-term chiropractic care, with little or no insurance compensable differentiation, that is responsible for our national lack of support from business, labor and insurance. (I am not anti-practice management but practice builders should not be setting clinical standards of care.)

This endemic, practice-building, overutilization problem was expressed repeatedly to your father in the early eighties by a number of doctors including myself, with the specific request that "DC" refuse all practice building advertisement until standards were adhered to by the industry. I repeated this challenge to you recently and you deleted it when printing my article concerning Oregon's workers compensation, overutilization problems.

For the third time in seven years I am challenging you to assert leadership and refuse advertising to all practice builders until monitored, national standards are in place for this industry. If you continue to play the "have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too" scapegoat game, ie; reporting important but sensational features like the PMA litigation and the Oregon debacle, while at the same time running lucrative full-page ads for practice builders, you will be playing the fool at best.

If chiropractic journalism and "DC" is to help lead chiropractic out of the quagmire of greed and

hypocrisy it must first shed those garments itself.

James R. Herriott, D.C.
Eugene, Oregon

Kudos to Dr. Herriott

Dear Editor:

I am in receipt of a copy of Dr. Herriott's letter of July 18, 1990 addressed to you.

As you probably know, I am an advertiser in Dynamic Chiropractic. I have previously advertised my audio cassette album "How To Build A Successful Workers' Compensation Practice and Earn The Respect You Deserve" and we recently had an insert for a workers' compensation seminar to be presented by Mr. Frank Abi-Nator, chief council of the state compensation insurance fund and myself.

The purpose of this letter is to applaud Dr. Herriott's position relative to the practice management industry.

I realize that a chiropractic publication cannot function profitably without advertisers, but you, Mr. Petersen, are going to really have to do some deep soul-searching to determine just how strong your "ethical" position really is.

Since I am responsible for introducing the concept of chiropractors performing disability evaluations, I have actually performed over 13,000 disability evaluations at the request of applicants' attorneys, plaintiffs' attorneys, workers' compensation carriers, personal injury carriers, and a few times also as an agreed medical examiner.

It was a very gratifying experience to watch chiropractic acceptance grow while we were able to prove to the insurance world that chiropractors are mature, professional, and ethical health care providers.

Unfortunately, this image has greatly changed in the last decade and what happened in Oregon is only a preview of what will happen when other states will have to reform their workers' compensation legislation. Who do you think will be the scapegoat? Certainly not the MDs.

If our profession, on a local, state, and national level, cannot prove that we will not condone the abuses and over-utilizations practiced by more than a small percentage of our practitioners, chiropractic participation in compensable insurance programs is going to be greatly curtailed.

I have never been a messenger of doom. At the same time, I have tried not to keep my head buried in the sand like an ostrich.

Dr. Herriott is to be commended for his astute observation of the reality of the present situation and you, sir, will have to make a decision as to where you envision the profession of chiropractic to be in the next decade.

The art and science of chiropractic has been established. The question is, who will perform the services presently performed by chiropractors.

Robert F. Fischel, D.C.

Policing the Profession

Dear Editor:

There has been much written about the need for the Chiropractic profession to police itself in order to eliminate the few illicit chiropractors from "spoiling the brew" for the entire profession. As a past chairman of the peer review committee in the state of Florida, it was obvious to all that there were only small percentage (less than 1 percent) who made the remaining 99 percent defend themselves constantly. This condition is not unique to the chiropractic profession, but unfortunately unlike other professions, we have a more difficult problem in hiding our abusers. All of the legitimate agencies of the chiropractic profession are all constantly striving to eliminate and overcome the damage done by these abusers, but the continuously blocked by legislative and bureaucratic interference and indifference. Those of our great profession who try to overlook the ethics and management of our profession, are seen to be acting alone and not given the support that they justly deserve.

We have been traditionally a crisis oriented profession, only able to come together when the future of our profession is seen to be heading toward an immediate demise. It is time for all of us to realize that we are in a crisis situation presently, if we do not seek ways to police our own industry, it may well indeed lead to our demise. Let us support our national, state, and local organizations. Let us support out institutions of academia, for it is here that the process of ethics and proper management begins.

*Stephen M. Ordet, D.C.
Hobe Sound, Florida*

Learning From West Virginia

Dear Editor:

Bravo for those stalwarts of our profession in West Virginia. They stood up and were counted. They were fed up and they didn't take it any more! Another governmental bureaucracy lost to the rightfulness of our place and purpose in the sun (Dynamic Chiropractic, July 18, 1990).

There are two very valuable lessons from which we can all learn. I hope that we do, in fact, learn from them. First -- make our detractors produce their "evidence" against us! In this case there wasn't any. The presentation by the State of West Virginia's Worker's Compensation Fund was not just fraudulent, it was non-existent! The blatant misrepresentation of the facts by a Workers' Compensation Fund employee (Greenwood) is incredible! It didn't hurt our case when it was revealed that Greenwood compared apples to oranges and that kind of trickery never works.

The second lesson which can be learned is less obvious. It is the active support of patients who were outraged by the cavalier maltreatment of our profession by a politically driven bureau of state government. We need more doctors to realize that our political strength is not in our ability to reduce subluxations! It is in our ability to motivate our patients to speak up and demand that chiropractic services be made available in the same way as any other service and those services be paid for as is any other health care service. Our patients must carry our banner. It is far better that our patients complain of the biased treatment which effects both patient and chiropractor than if we try. If we complain of the prejudicial treatment we receive at the hand of a political bureaucracy our efforts can

be misconstrued as being just a greedy bunch of rich doctors. But, it is quite another matter when a patient cannot receive what they know is effective treatment. It is an anomaly that as a group we are the best equipped to fight for our patient's rights for "parity" in health care. Remember that only 2,000,000 (of 36,000,000) eligible beneficiaries caused catastrophic Medicare to get canceled. There is strength in the numbers of "squeaky wheels" who are our patients.

Roland Toth, D.C.

Dayton, Ohio

A Word From Students At Northwestern College of Chiropractic

Dear Editor:

It's great that you talked about the students from Los Angeles College of Chiropractic who attended the ACA/ICA legislative conference this year. There were, however, a few students that you missed. Here at Northwestern College of Chiropractic our Student ACA chapter had been sending students to these annual legislative conferences for a number of years. You probably didn't see us because we usually were out working. We saw eighteen legislators, both those in our home districts and those on sub-committees we were targeting for specific legislation. We set up those meetings ourselves, and compiled information on lobbying for all the SACA chapters. Experienced students accompanied the new ones; the learning experience alone was worth the trip.

Joining us this year were Kayce Frye (then the SACA national Chairman) and Michael Vaughn from Parker College of Chiropractic, Willy Turner from National College of Chiropractic, and Eddie Libich with two other students from Cleveland College of Chiropractic, Kansas City.

To the chiropractors and students out there: Whether or not you feel political, you have chosen a profession that is. Legislators make their decisions based on the information they have and the interest shown by their constituents. We've survived and progressed so far on the state level due to our patient's support and the work of a few active doctors, but Washington is a whole different ball game. Given the lack of activity by DCs and students, that we have little or no presence in Washington should come as no surprise. Those who expect one, two, or even three hired lobbyists to do our work for us are sadly naive about what it will take to overcome the years of damage done to us by our opponents. And those of us who have not even bothered to join a national organization are truly living in a dreamworld if they expect their profession to survive intact into the 21st century (a mere ten and one half years away). Any national health plan without chiropractic coverage would decimate the profession.

Together is the only way we will make a difference. It's trite, you've heard it before, and it's still true. While going to the national legislative conference is important, there are a lot of things you can do without ever leaving your home town. If you don't know how you can be most effective, ask the ACA or the ICA for information. If you're not yet a member ... well, guess what your first step is.

Richard Berman, Jim Lovett,

Dale Schmoll, and Troy Amdahl

Bloomington, Minnesota

A Thank you to Walter Rhodes, D.C.

Dear Editor:

Thank you for the articles submitted by Dr. Walter Rhodes concerning insurance claims. His step by step "how to" and brief explanation as to "why" have been very helpful; the first articles that have prompted me to say thank you in my 28 years as a chiropractor.

In opposition, most articles are rather vague, include a lot of hype and seem to conclude coincidentally at the same time as an associated advertisement for some gadget, book, seminar, etc. (Did I say coincidentally !??)

Articles such as Dr. Rhoades submitted, do much more for our profession than do the "buy my product" articles and seminars with which many of us have become disillusioned.

Thank you, Dr. Rhoades.

Arthur L. Andrews, D.C.
Freeville, New York

In Praise of Responsible Journalism

Dear Editor:

My compliments. It is refreshing to see a change in focus of your "Report of My Findings" toward the real opponents of our fine profession -- organized medicine. If everyone in chiropractic will continue to follow this example of responsible journalism, rather than being seduced, by their own self interests, into mud-slinging and justification reactions, our patients will benefit, our profession will prosper and the "Berlin Walls" of chiropractic will come tumbling down with a speed that will amaze us all.

Chiropractors, probably more than any other professionals, have always cared about their patients. I think chiropractors are finally ready to start caring about their fellow chiropractors. I see your editorial in Dynamic Chiropractic, July 18, 1990 as a fine beginning toward unifying us all in the noble cause that we all know must go forward.

Keep up the good work and others will follow.

Allen Roberds, D.C.
Nashville, Tennessee

SEPTEMBER 1990