

Safe Medicine - Dangerous Chiropractic

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By maintaining that the risk posed to patients by chiropractic care is greater than the risk posed to patients by medical treatment, the safe-medicine/dangerous-chiropractic myth turns fact upon its head. The myth relies upon ignorance of rates of harm arising from medical treatment as distinct from the patient's disorder, while greatly exaggerating the relatively insignificant level of harm associated with chiropractic care.

A foundation of disinformation underwrites the Iowa Plan's expressed purpose, "(T)o first contain, and eventually, destroy the profession of chiropractic in the United States and elsewhere."¹ Myths serve to demean chiropractic in the minds of patients, legislators, the media and chiropractors.

The worldwide continuing denial of trading rights to chiropractors in the big public health marketplace and the containment of our trade to within the small private health marketplace reflects that the Wilk trial did not end the continuing success of the goal to "contain" chiropractic. Had the goal to "destroy the profession of chiropractic" been achieved, medicine may have captured much of the income derived by chiropractors. Denying chiropractors equal trading rights in the global public health marketplace protects medicine against considerable financial loss.

"One of the principal means used by the AMA to achieve its goal was to make it unethical for medical physicians to associate with chiropractors."² Disinformation-based boycotts occurred in various countries. Only in the United States did the court declare it to be an illegal restraint of trade.

Over decades and globally, hundreds of thousands of medical practitioners may have assisted to spread disinformation among patients and legislators, who continue to echo these myths. For example, I asked a medical bureaucrat why legislators deny public patients access to, and funding for, chiropractic care within public health facilities and programs. He echoed the safe-medicine/dangerous-chiropractic myth: "It's a question of risk."

The safe-medicine part of that myth negatively impacts chiropractors and our patients. We need to know about harm arising from medical treatment as distinct from patient disorders. The term for that harm is iatrogenic. *Iatro* refers to physician; *genesis* to create. To define the full spectrum of fatal iatrogenic harm, one needs to collate scattered medical total rates of harm into various categories of iatrogenesis. For example:

1. adverse reactions to incorrectly prescribed drugs
2. adverse reactions to correctly prescribed drugs
3. errors (wrong site, wrong procedure, wrong patient) during surgery
4. medical error
5. hospital-acquired infections
6. bedsores
7. malnutrition among hospitalized patients

8. unnecessary medical procedures
9. failure to properly diagnose
10. misdiagnosis
11. failure to correctly treat
12. death arising from injury from therapeutic devices

Categories of iatrogenesis were used in a groundbreaking study by U.S. researchers, who shared three MD degrees and a PhD degree. The key quote in their published article is the following: "The most stunning statistic, however, is that the total number of deaths caused by conventional medicine is an astounding 783,936 per year. It is now evident that the American medical system is the leading cause of death and injury in the U.S."³

If that stunning statistic is applicable over decades to each country's medical system, medicine must rank as the most dangerous health profession. The world's mainstream media seems to share an extraordinary silence about the big picture of an apparent global iatrogenic pandemic and its cumulative toll. If millions of people have been harmed by a decades-long iatrogenic pandemic, key people could not fail to know about that. Their duty of care demands accountability, public investigation, and mass nationwide media forewarning about an iatrogenic epidemic to future potential victims.

The governments which sponsor that harm, the profession that creates it and the media that promotes medical treatment appear to be caught in an extraordinary conflict between their own vested interests and the health care interests of medical patients. To ensure failure to forewarn is not due to some extraordinary oversight; I sent information about the full spectrum of iatrogenesis to key media and political people. Australia's mainstream media remains silent about the big picture. Four senators have shown moderate interest.

Defining Australia's full spectrum of fatal iatrogenic harm begins with a framework of categories of iatrogenesis. The reply to one of my questions by Australia's Minister for Health reflects astounding chosen ignorance: "The Australian Government does not make estimates of annual fatalities arising from these categories."⁴

Australia is one of the nations where legislators effectively deny millions of public patients who have subluxation-related disorders access to chiropractic care. The unnecessary exposure of these patients to inappropriate medical treatment and iatrogenic risk betrays public and patient interests. When compared to the rate of iatrogenesis, what chiropractors do is as the report from New Zealand put it: "remarkably safe."⁵ If "a question of risk" defines patient access to professions, then where appropriate, chiropractic care should take precedence over medical treatment.

Silence protects the safe-medicine part of the myth. It will die in the light of exposure. As Donald M. Petersen Jr. recently advised chiropractors, "Our patients need to hear about the dangers and alternatives. You are probably the only one they can depend on to provide this valuable service."⁶

Chiropractors have a choice: to be informed participants in that silence or to voice opposition to what is being done to our patients and to our profession. It is my hope that by providing data relating to the rates of iatrogenesis to key people within their spheres of influence, chiropractors around the globe will help discredit this myth and stop it from being used as a justification for containing chiropractic.

The report from the New Zealand Commission commented, "We are satisfied that chiropractic treatment in New Zealand is remarkably safe."⁵ Let us all ensure that people within our sphere of influence also know that truth.

References

1. MPI report of *Wilk v AMA* trial, page 2.
2. *American Medical News*, Jan. 13, 1992.
3. As we see it: dangerous medicine. *LE Magazine*, March 2004. www.lef.org/magazine/mag2004/mar2004_aws_i_01.htm.
4. Reply to *Questions on Notice*, #577. Australian Parliament, Sept. 15, 2005.
5. *Report of the Commission of Inquiry Into Chiropractic*. Commission of Inquiry Into Chiropractic, 1979:pg 77.
6. A prescription for disaster. *Dynamic Chiropractic*, Feb. 12, 2005. www.chiroweb.com/archives/23/04/14.html.

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