

100 Percent Focused on Chiropractic?

IT'S ALL ABOUT PATIENT PERCEPTION

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I think we all agree that too many people consider doctors of chiropractic "back pain" doctors. There are several reasons why the public has this perception. For starters, it's where chiropractic excels, according to research. The studies consistently demonstrate that chiropractic should be the first choice for "uncomplicated low-back pain" and other forms of back pain. There are studies regarding chiropractic for other conditions and areas of the body, but they are fewer in number and less conclusive.

Second, the average person can't help but have the impression that chiropractic is for back pain based upon the advertising they see. What they read in our advertising limits our perceived value to back problems. The concept of wellness through chiropractic generally is missing in these messages. With that said, how can anyone realize that chiropractic effects healing in all parts of the body?

Unfortunately, these beliefs often are confirmed when a patient walks into our office. While addressing fixations in the spine, we fail to explain the impact of those fixations on the patient's overall health. They come in with back pain; we adjust their spine and they leave with their back "fixed." Thus, their logical conclusion is that chiropractic is for back pain.

For the average consumer, "health and wellness" encompasses a number of health habits and forms of health care. And while the pharmaceutically infected media is trying to reshape the public's perception of health and wellness, there are certain characteristics with which almost every person would agree:

1. *Pain Free* - No one in pain believes they are healthy.
2. *Proper Eating* - Asking people about their diet usually results in all kinds of confessions that reveal the public's awareness of, if not compliance with, healthy eating.
3. *Nutritional Supplementation* - Nutritional supplements are almost universally accepted as necessary for good health.
4. *Physical Fitness* - Everyone knows what healthy looks like and what they look like, and how the two differ.
5. *Elimination of Unhealthy Habits* - Smoking, drinking excessively, taking unnecessary drugs, consuming too many sweets, etc., are also habits that the average consumer knows are unhealthy.

Take another look at this list. All five are things you, as a doctor of chiropractic, can and should be addressing with each one of your patients. Items 2-5 are addressed by personal trainers at your local gym - why not by you? Certainly, you have much more training than they do.

Your patients don't need a lecture. They get one every time they look in the mirror or down at the scale. They are reminded when they huff and puff going up the stairs or can't keep up with their grandchildren at the park. What they need is a wellness coach. They need someone they can trust; someone who will encourage them to do the right things to maintain optimal health.

As our population gets older, the value of their health increases. Without saying so specifically, what most people really want is to look great, feel great and live forever - and most of them want to do it "naturally."

This is where chiropractic has an amazing opportunity. You can offer health, wellness and rejuvenation to people who are neglecting their health in order to meet their demanding schedules. With a little effort, you can make your office visits a revitalizing experience your patients will look forward to every time.

Make no mistake: Health and wellness are your patients' ultimate objectives. But most people currently see chiropractic only as a solution for pain, not as an avenue to health.

You can change that. But in order to do so, you will have to review what you do and what you say from the patient's perspective. From their point of view, do you address their total health or just the back-pain part?

What are you saying to your patients? Are you communicating that your approach to their health is 100 percent focused on (what they perceive to be) chiropractic or that your chiropractic practice is 100 per-cent focused on their health?

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