

Communicating Chiropractic Via the Internet

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In more than 20 years of practice, I have been asked to donate money to pay for advertising, legal defense funds and broadcasting of information about chiropractic to the public.

It costs a lot of money to pay for TV, radio, newspaper and magazine ads. At best, the chiropractic message is fleeting in these communication formats.

There is a better, cheaper and easier way these days to get the chiropractic message out to the public: Use the Internet. Post messages on Internet use groups. Make a video for YouTube.com. Write up your own MySpace.com bio. Create a radio station on Live365.com. Post a blog anywhere you can. Write up your chiropractic experience and let the world read about it, hear it or see it for itself. The multiple formats available today to share data make it possible to inform the public about chiropractic and share your stories. You can even upload pictures or videos of chiropractic for the world to see.

But be careful! You are about to enter the public domain. Mind your manners and put your best foot forward. When you post online and discuss chiropractic, you are representing our profession to the whole world. Make a good impression and be ready to back up your words. You may find that other readers and contributors are not as enthusiastic about chiropractic as we are. They will challenge you to demonstrate the research that backs what you claim. Be evidence-based.

We chiropractors experience our office successes firsthand. What we see, we believe to be true. But that is not research. Your visual patient experience is empirical. Your Internet colleagues will challenge you to provide the research - typewritten, double-spaced, peer-reviewed, double-blind and placebo-controlled. Those folks are our reductionists in science and health care. The person writing back to you online might be a student medical doctor, teacher, researcher, medic, another chiro or even a nonlicensed homeschooled mother. Many of these valid scientists, doctors and educated citizens of the Internet may never have personally experienced the phenomenon of chiropractic and don't believe the way we do things. They will challenge your typewritten words. Be ready to provide the published research that supports what you say.

Share your empiricalvitalistic experiences with the Internet community anyway! There is power, potential and hope in sharing your chiropractic success stories with the public. If you persuade an individual on the other side of the country to go see a chiropractor, you have helped them and forwarded the profession as a group. Web posting may or may not directly benefit you personally. But your words may help many people you never meet.

The easiest way to communicate with the public is through Internet use groups. There are forums of discussion for almost any subject you can imagine. We can contribute to many of the health- and disease-related forums. I suggest you linger and read the postings for awhile; get to know a forum before you start contributing. Be polite. Do not put other health care forums down openly. It will quickly get you attacked by other writers. Avoid falling into discussions and arguments with other

writers that are nonproductive. Remember, we can find common ground in all our life experiences when we share them. Don't fall for illogical arguments, common fallacies and blind alleys. Discussion forums can be lively and hotly debated. Hang in there and hold your ground.

The medics have a Web site they will refer to often when you enter group discussions. When you post your comments online, invariably, some MD will simply refer all forum readers to Quackwatch.com. This is Stephen Barrett's anti-chiropractic site. At first, you might be frustrated or even infuriated by this medical propaganda. Get over it. It's out there. Have a look at it and keep going. You cannot take this Web site down and the public has every opportunity to see it for themselves. Don't worry about it. It's an attempt to name-call instead of confronting a debate issue.

Don't let your Internet colleagues get you off track if you're pressing an issue on a use-group discussion. You can even use this opportunity to comment on the educational standard of chiropractors compared to medical doctors, our state and national board examiners, postgraduate education and self-study. The chance to inform the public is available even in a difficult attack on your credibility. Whatever you do, don't go reactive and lash back at the person who called you names. Be professional and well-worded, and the public will determine for themselves whom the quacks might be.

Another easy way to communicate with your patients and the world about chiropractic is to create your own Web page for your office. You can get inexpensive help in writing these. Write up your experiences online and let your patients know your Web page address. They will log on and read what you have to say. When you have an issue you wish the patients to know about, write it up on your Web site and refer patients to your online communication. This is so easy and it's really fun. My office Web page has a journal on the front page. I post my blogs there for all to see. It's like an office diary everyone can read.

Currently, YouTube and MySpace are options for communication. Netizens are posting all kinds of how-to data in the form of short-run videos. Perhaps you want to post a question-and-answer video about your office and practices. You can talk about chiropractic and [fill in the blank]. It's very easy to upload video files from your camera via a common bus cable.

There are thousands of doctors and students of chiropractic who are educated and excited to share their chiropractic experiences with the world. Telling our stories to patients one at a time is not really productive. We can write up one story, post it online and the whole world can read it, copy it and share it with friends. This is the power of Internet communication. And it doesn't cost you a dime; just a little of your time. I truly believe this is the best and easiest method of communicating the story of chiropractic to the world.

MAY 2008