

Our Virtual Chiropractic Association: An Idea Whose Time Has Come?

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The year 2000 marked the birth of a big idea in chiropractic: [Our Virtual Chiropractic Association \(OVCA\)](#). The vision articulated by *Dynamic Chiropractic* publisher Donald M. Petersen Jr. was simple, elegant, and held great potential. The idea was to create a virtual chiropractic association led by individuals elected by the profession at large. As Don wrote, "No one will be asked to join anything, pay any dues or resign from either of the two national chiropractic associations. But this is a rare opportunity to envision what could be. To create a shared vision for chiropractic in the United States and examine the value, requirements and potential benefits of making that shared vision become reality."¹

Today we still have multiple, competing national associations. While there have been some synergistic initiatives in recent years, the majority of practicing DCs have not seen fit to commit their time or talent to any national chiropractic association. In the recent past, I've shared [my views on unity](#).² However, the matter becomes more pressing with substantial changes in federal health policy looming.

Back in 2000, the proposed virtual chiropractic association began to take form. Nominations were accepted, elections were held, and five chiropractors were elected to lead the new organization. I was honored to be among the five, along with Drs. Dan Murphy, Guy Riekeman, Chester Wilk and Gerard Clum. Yet, for whatever reasons, the seed never germinated, and OVCA never became a viable organization. I share the blame for allowing that to happen.

Today, many more DCs are online. Hopefully, many more are aware of how fragile our future as a profession is without decisive, unified action to promote our shared identity and vision. It is time to identify issues of commonality and agreement, make a fierce declaration of purpose, muster our underutilized treasure trove of satisfied patients and boldly claim our rightful position in the health care system.

Each of the five chiropractors elected to OVCA was invited to write their vision for chiropractic and OVCA. Those of you who are interested in reading these articles in their entirety [can do so online](#). It is sad to see that many of the issues which were unresolved then continue to hinder our progress today:

"Challenges and opportunities now face the chiropractic profession. Doctors of chiropractic have traditionally been strong individualists. Such personalities were necessary to ensure individual survival in the hostile environment of the profession's first 90 years. DCs were plagued with economic disincentives for patients seeking chiropractic services, and a constant perceived need to establish legitimacy and cultural authority.

"The very survival strategies that brought us our successes have become millstones inhibiting continued progress. The staunch individualism of chiropractors is admirable, yet our associations are riddled with power struggles, ad hominem attacks, backstabbing, name calling, and covert actions aimed at destroying a perceived enemy. The real enemy is our own inability to see the futility of such strategies."³

We can no longer afford the luxury of apathy. Our very survival is at stake. We need a new vision and a new plan. Unified action on key issues is possible without sacrificing our diversity. Some ideas proposed in 2001 included:

Research: Chiropractors should be encouraged to support and participate in research. More emphasis needs to be placed upon issues affecting wellness. We must determine the benefits of chiropractic care for all patients, not just those with musculoskeletal pain. To achieve this, research should be directed toward health-related quality-of-life indices, improvement in physiologic indicators (such as autonomic function), effects on immune function, and the development of improved clinical strategies and techniques.

Education: Our colleges should reflect the core values of our profession, and should become meccas of clinical and academic excellence. Basic science faculty needs to effectively integrate chiropractic concepts and values into their teaching. There must be a concerted effort to improve the clinic experience, with exposure to a wide variety of real-world cases. Finally, chiropractic education should be a nurturing experience that places profound value on the dignity of each student, and fosters spiritual and academic growth.

Other Opportunities: An area for unified action that has not yet been effectively implemented is the mobilization of "patient power." Patients wield tremendous political clout. An effective patient organization would also contribute tremendously to our culture. Moreover, chiropractors should develop alliances with individuals and organizations committed to health freedom issues, and establish strategic alliances with them for joint legislative action.

And what of the [structure of OVCA](#)? What was proposed then makes perfect sense now: "A website could be constructed where each DC would have a password. Discussions of key issues could take place, and the website could also provide for voting. All chiropractors and their leaders could access these discussions and vote tabulations. This would provide for grassroots input without dues, meetings, or [Robert's Rules](#); the only requirements being: no anonymous posts, and courtesy and respect for our colleagues. The challenge to meeting the cultural demands for leadership in the health care revolution will require more than just vision, passion, and commitment. It will require separating personalities from issues. We need leaders who are as skilled in the ways of diplomacy as they are in the techniques of war."³

I believe OVCA still has great potential to reach the disenfranchised majority of the field and provide them with a way to be heard. Are you interested in making a difference?

References

1. Petersen DM Jr. "[Virtual Unity: Your Chance to Design Our Future.](#)" *Dynamic Chiropractic*, Oct. 2, 2000;18(21).
2. Kent C. "[Unity: Dream or Reality?](#)" *Dynamic Chiropractic*, Feb. 12, 2009;27(4).
3. Kent C. "[Chiropractic Visions of the Leaders of 'Our Virtual Chiropractic Association.'](#)" *Dynamic*

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