

Medicine Presents: A Great Opportunity

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The changing nature of health care presents both opportunities and challenges. While we tend to focus on our profession, we can sometimes forget the impact other health care professions can have on us. If you haven't kept up on them, you should know about some very interesting trends taking place in medicine that will present great opportunities for doctors of chiropractic in the near future.

A 2013 survey by Deloitte Development¹ looked at how medical physicians see the future of medicine. Some of the trends revealed by the survey definitely could have an impact on the future of chiropractic:

- "Six in 10 physicians say that it is likely that many physicians will retire earlier than planned in the next one to three years."
- "Four in 10 physicians report that their take-home pay decreased from 2011 to 2012."
- "Half (51 percent) of all physicians think that physician incomes will fall dramatically in the next one to three years."
- "Eight in 10 physicians agree that the wave of the future in medicine over the next decade involves interdisciplinary teams and care coordinators."
- "Nearly eight in 10 believe that mid-level professionals will play a bigger role in direct primary care delivery."

In support of these findings, [a study](#) published last year in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that "burnout is more common among physicians than among other US workers." Investigators noted that "45.8% of physicians reported at least 1 symptom of burnout."²

So, if you ask medical doctors how their practices are doing, nearly half are likely to tell you they are suffering from burnout, seeing their income drop and expect their income to drop "dramatically" over the next few years. If you ask them how medicine will change, 80 percent believe that they will be working more with other health care professions and that other health care professions will play a larger role in primary care.

Looking a little further out, [a report](#) on family physicians from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes, "[E]stimates suggest that by 2020 the U.S. healthcare system will be 40,000 (medical) doctors short of where it needs to be in the primary care arena to support the demand for medical care."³ Seven years is not that far away.

While doctors of chiropractic were not mentioned in any of the above reports, we certainly would be considered candidates for the interdisciplinary teams and playing a larger role in primary care. The real question is how to prepare in order to take advantage of these opportunities.

Louis Pasteur is quoted as saying, "Chance favors the prepared mind." In our case, opportunity favors the prepared doctor of chiropractic. As you consider the above, it is apparent that integration into the

evolving health care system will be critical. You can't be part of an interdisciplinary team if you are *outside* the system. This will require becoming familiar with new concepts like accountable care organizations in order to determine if and how you want to be involved.

For DCs close to retirement, it may be "practice as usual" for the next few years. Why make changes if you are doing well and not required to? But for younger docs, the evolving health care landscape holds no shortage of obstacles *and* opportunities. You are the ones who will need to become knowledgeable about the emerging changes to health care delivery and management.

The challenges faced by the medical profession have the potential to create opportunities for chiropractic as a profession and your practice specifically. Spend some time learning, thinking and planning for your next 10 years. With a little work, they could be the best years of your career.

References

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3. "Audience Insights: Communicating to Family Physicians; Trends Among Today's Family Physicians." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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