

The Opioid Crisis: "Let's Roll!"

By James Edwards, DC

Sept. 11, 2018 will mark the 17th anniversary of the horrific terroristic attack on the U.S. Whenever I think about that day, I am reminded of the heroes on Flight 93 who took action to keep the airliner away from Washington, D.C., by making it crash into the ground near Shanksville, Pa.

I have personally had the opportunity to visit all four crash sites of the 9/11 highjacked aircrafts, but the crash site of Flight 93 holds special significance to me because it was the only airliner on that day on which the passengers took control.

It has been said that those passengers were the first American heroes of this millennium and I totally agree. Instead of sitting frozen and afraid in their seats, they followed the lead of Todd Beamer, who was recorded as saying, "Let's roll!" just before he and his fellow passengers stormed the cockpit, resulting in the aircraft crashing before it could reach the terrorists' intended Washington, D.C., target.

While I do not want to even remotely suggest that what doctors of chiropractic can do to solve the opioid crisis would in any way equate with the degree of heroism, bravery and courage those passengers exhibited, I want to sensitize you to what we as a profession can do to stop the senseless deaths of 175 Americans each day.¹

To put it in perspective, 2,977 died on that fateful 9/11 date, but the number of Americans who are dying from opioids is simply staggering. Opioids are currently killing more than 5,250 Americans each and every month. Not per year, not over the 16-year intervening period of time since 9/11 – but each and every month!

The Power of Legislation

In chiropractic's necessary effort to stop the opioid crisis, we have powerful allies including the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG), who in a letter signed by 39 state AGs,² specifically mentioned chiropractic care as an alternative to opioids. What's more, the most recent Gallup-Palmer poll found most Americans prefer nondrug therapy to relieve their pain.³

The action by the NAAG, the findings of the Gallup-Palmer poll and the President's Commission will be helpful to the effort. However, and as detailed in my previous column,⁴ a legislative prohibition is absolutely essential in order to solve the opioid crisis.

If you haven't already contacted your state association, the ACA and the ICA and urged them to support legislative action requiring a trial of conservative care before opioids are prescribed, please do so today.

How You Can Make a Difference

Once you have contacted your state and national associations, take personal action by emailing your state representative, state senator, U.S. member of the House of Representatives and your two U.S. senators. For your state-elected officials, just do an Internet search for their email addresses. For your two U.S. senators and your U.S. House member, you can email them directly by going to <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>.

In all of your communications to your elected representatives, the very same message to each of them can be as brief as the following:

Dear (Senator/Representative),

In an effort to solve the opioid crisis that is currently causing the deaths of 175 Americans each and every day, I strongly urge you to introduce and/or support legislation immediately that states the following:

"Unless a patient presents with an emergency or life-threatening condition, the prescription of an opioid medication by a medical provider is prohibited unless and until an appropriate regimen of nondrug, conservative care has been employed and documented to have failed. Said nondrug conservative care includes, but is not limited to, chiropractic, physical therapy, naturopathy, homeopathy, acupuncture, massage, psychological counseling, hypnosis and biofeedback."

Thank you for your consideration on this critically important issue and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, (Your Name)

Chiropractic Is the Answer

The media's focus on the opioid crises gives the chiropractic profession the opportunity for the public to finally realize that we are not bone doctors; we are nervous-system doctors who offer the treatment of choice for most pain. As Dr. Hugo Gibson famously stated, "Have you seen the literature? It's published, it's printed, its proven."⁵ Unquestionably, chiropractic is the answer.

If the chiropractic profession does not take all actions necessary to legislatively prohibit opioid prescriptions until a course of conservative care has been attempted, we are just wolves howling at the moon. I urge you to heed the immortal words of American hero Todd Beamer: "Let's Roll!" by contacting your state / national associations, and emailing your four state and federal legislators. Not tomorrow, after another 175 Americans have died from opioids – but today.

References

1. *The President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis*, Nov. 1, 2017 (report).
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 3. "Gallup-Palmer: Americans Want Drug-Free Pain Relief." *Dynamic Chiropractic*, September 2017 (breaking news).
 4. Edwards J. "The Opioid Epidemic: It's Time We Stand and Fight." *Dynamic Chiropractic*, October 2017.
 5. "The Proven Choice." Kansas Chiropractic Association video, 1995.
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