

It's Our Watch

By James Edwards, DC

Our Responsibility

On September 1, I accepted the honor of becoming the 23rd person to serve as chairman of the American Chiropractic Association. In my first message to the profession, I would like to share my views on the responsibilities of being a doctor of chiropractic by taking a proud look back to our past, and discuss this profession's greatest need by looking forward to our future.

The profession of chiropractic is here today because the first generation of chiropractors was willing to make sacrifices when chiropractic needed them. In those early days, DCs were willing to go to jail on behalf of the profession they loved.

Thinking about that time 80 to 90 years later, it may not seem like such a big deal, but it was. I have thought many times about what it must have been like for those doctors to hear the cell door clang shut and not know how long they would be there. I have tried to imagine how difficult it must have been explaining to their children why the police had taken them to jail.

Many times I have asked myself if I would have had the intestinal fortitude to do that; if I would have disobeyed the law and stood firm to protect this profession in its time of need. It was their "watch." Those early DCs were responsible for what happened to chiropractic, and their commitment ensured that future generations would have this wonderful healing art. They paid the price during their "watch," and because they did, chiropractic survived.

The problem today is that too many doctors of chiropractic think this healing art belongs to doctors of chiropractic: well, it doesn't. It never has and it never will. Chiropractic belongs to humanity; we are merely its caretakers for this particular generation at this particular time.

What we do with it, how we preserve it, how we defend it, how we protect it, and how we nurture it will affect many generations to come. In the final analysis, our primary responsibility is to take chiropractic and pass it on to the next generation better and stronger

than it was when we received it.

To every ACA dues-paying member, I salute you for doing your part. It is your continued support that has allowed the ACA volunteer leadership, along with the 40 dedicated men and women who serve on the ACA staff to accomplish victory after victory after victory on behalf of you and your patients.

If you have been sitting on the sidelines, then I urge you to get involved now. I invite you to join the ACA as we work to achieve even greater victories for this profession!

Our Greatest Need

In my opinion, chiropractic's first century (or so) will be remembered as the "100-Year War." This profession not only fought (and continues to fight) the AMA, it fought (and continues to fight) battles among its own practitioners and associations. We continue to circle the wagons and shoot inward, and that simply must stop if we are ever going to mature.

It is time for the leaders of this profession to say, "Enough is enough," and take bold steps to stop the infighting. It's time for leaders of this profession to accentuate what we agree upon, rather than focus on the small things that divide us. It's time for the leadership to do the right thing for the profession without regard to how individual leaders might be affected politically. And it's time for self-serving leaders to stop using this profession to advance their personal and economic agendas.

Although some continue to say that a split profession is good for chiropractic, likening it to our two-party political system, they are simply wrong. When the United States goes to war, we do not go to war as Republicans or Democrats. We go to war as Americans and fight under one flag.

That's what we are called to do now, because this profession is at war. And it is a war that is being fought by the ACA on many different fronts.

- The ACA is at war in the courts with Trigon Blue Cross/Blue Shield for severely limiting reimbursement for (and access to) chiropractic care.
- The ACA is at war in the courts with the federal government to overturn the HCFA policy that allows the chiropractic benefit to be delivered by nonchiropractors.
- The ACA is at war legislatively to ensure that active military personnel and veterans have access to chiropractic care, and that Medicare beneficiaries receive reimbursement for services authorized by state law.

It is time for this profession to end the civil war that has pitted our brothers and sisters against one another for so long. It is time for this profession to stop wasting our limited resources on needless duplication of services. It is time to start speaking with one voice. It is time for this profession to fight under the flag that the ACA has hoisted so high!

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