

Chairman's Message



JAMES D. EDWARDS, DC

Stepping Aside

By JAMES D. EDWARDS, DC

One of the truly wonderful things about being ACA chairman is having a regular column in both ACA Today and the Journal of the American Chiropractic Association where I can discuss issues that are important to the chiropractic profession.

I had already decided to discuss professional unity this month because no other issue is more important to the future of this profession. While typing away on the first draft, an e-mail popped up on my computer screen that contained an article by Larry Markson, DC, entitled, "Let Us Be United."

After reading it, I realized that ACA members needed to have this information. Although I disagree with a few of his comments about the ACA, Dr. Markson's article clearly and convincingly outlines what this profession needs and a way to get there. For that reason, I have decided to step aside

this month and allow Dr. Markson to use the chairman's column for his important message to the profession.

Let Us Be United

By LARRY MARKSON, DC

Chiropractic's unmatched contribution to health care is unassailable. I know it. You know it. Our patients know it. Most people, however, still understand little of the far-reaching and beneficial effects of chiropractic care. Even 107 years later, we as a profession have failed miserably in doing enough to transform this country's, and in fact, this world's fundamental beliefs about health and wellness, as they relate to chiropractic.

Is this because we are too busy fighting ourselves? Is that why we haven't taken the time to modernize our message so all concerned learn that chiropractic has amassed enough clinical and scientific data to give absolute credence to our very existence?

Changing our national attitude about health is the first step. It is a worthy mission and one that must be embraced by every chiropractic organization and every one of the 60,000 chiropractors in America. Our goal as a profession must be more than mere survival. We must take a much more proactive stand and cultivate our own articulate spokespeople, who hopefully will end up on national and cable TV news shows.

After all these years, we as a profession still believe that we are "alternative" health care practitioners because too many of us, over time, have buckled under to societal pressure, and have our-

selves bought into traditional medical thinking.

There are even those among us who are attempting to influence national chiropractic consciousness toward becoming "DCMs," doctors of chiropractic medicine. What ever happened to chiropractic as a separate, distinct, and unique healing art/profession that can, and I think must, stand on its own? Surely, we want to be a self-regulated profession and not fall under the oppression of outside influence, like those who know little (and care less) about who we are and what we stand for—Trigon Blue Cross/Shield, for example.

Our profession has been fragmented for nearly all of our existence, and I warn you that a profession fragmented in purpose or philosophy usually becomes stagnant and loses whatever power is necessary to succeed. One century later, we still have two or three national organizations and different associations, societies, and councils in each state. Each keeps trying to win the war by negative press about how wrong the other guy is, by slandering those who don't think like us, and by sending conflicting bills to legislative bodies—who, by this time, are tired of getting caught between volleys of stale, out-of-date rhetoric.

Let the Silent Majority Step Forward

Oddly enough, the national organizations only represent a fraction of all chiropractors.

Believe it or not, the ACA, ICA, and WCA together have fewer than 10,000 members. That means that 50,000 DCs in America alone belong to nothing!

We call them apathetic—they tell us that belonging to a state or national organization has no value—that nothing changes except for the names of the officers.

I say, let our leaders make unity a priority and put us on the right path. Once that happens, we will most assuredly witness a rapid metamorphosis from apathy to passionate participation.

It's time for us to see the bigger picture! A weak, ineffectual profession can't tell the world's patients who we are and what we can do to help them live a happier and healthier life. I tell you that our time has come! The year 2003 is our gate to the future.

We want equality...we want parity... we want the recognition we deserve...we want acceptance...and we want respect, but it's not going to happen unless we make it happen for ourselves. It starts with "us changing us"! The past is yesterday's news—let it go and let's move forward.

Our total attention and focus must be toward **UNITY IN OUR PROFESSION**. Unity does not necessarily mean merger. For me, either way is OK—united by principle under one banner or total merger—if we are sophisticated enough to pull that off. Unfortunately, I don't think we are—yet. But trust me, the time **WILL** come!

Personally, I am for progress and not for the status quo. I am for immediate action, as long as the umbrella over our heads loudly and clearly proclaims chiropractic principle—that we give adjustments, not manipulations, and that we render holistic health care to our patients, but leave the treatment of disease to our medical brethren.

And, by the way, it doesn't matter to me what the current leaders of our profession think. They are all great people who devote hours and hours of their precious time to our profession, yet they still passionately believe what they have always believed. In their own minds, they are justified—and right. As a result, nothing happens.

Our total attention and focus must be toward unity in our profession. I know that we are sophisticated enough to pull it off—if we really, really want to. Trust me. It will happen sooner or later. Let's make it happen sooner. How about right now?

Each group, when individually polled, clearly comprehends the value and benefits gained from unification. Intelligence, or the lack of it, is not their problem. They are all incredibly bright. Much like the rest of us, however, they get caught up in their own belief system, which they vigorously and passionately defend. It is simply how they see things, and none of it, when looked at from all sides, can be construed as "wrong."

They merely have opposing viewpoints, fostered by our traditionally fractionated and fractious chiropractic system over years and years. It originates early and stems from where they went to school, how and by whom they were taught, what model they used as the basis for their own practices, and how they, as individuals, evolved over the years.

Open communication, which is happening at the National Chiropractic Leadership Foundation (NCLF) meetings, might be a good start, and perhaps the Congress of Chiropractic State

Associations (COCSA) should be the main source of beginning unity efforts. Wherever we start, start we must. Things cannot, must not, stay the same. If they do, we will have more of the same.

Focus on Our Common Values, Not Our Differences

Metaphorically, it looks something like this. One group says, "Yes, we want unity, too, but we are 'principled' and 'subluxation-based.'" We will unify when the other side limits its scope of practice and means of facilitation and comes over to our way of thinking." The other group says, "We want unity, too, but we see an expanded scope of practice and want to use whatever means of facilitation techniques are available to help us get patients well. By the way, we adjust subluxations, too. Unity is also our goal, but it can only happen when your side surrenders to our way of thinking."

Stop! We've been saying and doing the same thing year after year, and regardless of individual beliefs—right or wrong—this approach doesn't work! It's time to change.

Legislators on the national level, as well as those in the individual states, simply don't know what to do. They can't decide which side to take or which piece of legislation is better for their constituents. So they do nothing. And we get nowhere—again!

Two Major Issues

There are two major issues as I see it. The first deals with chiropractic beliefs, as discussed above. The other deals with the human condition and how individuals operate. To have unity, it

and clear what WE want...and what we want is UNITY!! ▼

Dr. Larry Markson is CEO of the Masters Circle, a Personal and

Professional Practice Development Program for chiropractors. The opinions expressed are his and are not meant to disparage any individual or organi-

zation now attempting to do their best for the profession. He can be reached at 800/451-4514 or at larry@themasterscircle.com.



Mark Your Calendars: NCLC 2003 Set for March 5-8

It's coming: the 2003 National Chiropractic Legislative Conference (NCLC)—the chiropractic profession's most prestigious and exciting legislative event. Every year, NCLC attracts many important congressional leaders and other chiropractic supporters, who update attendees on chiropractic legislation as well as other health care issues. Attendees then head to Capitol Hill to meet with their representatives and lobby for even more support. It's an opportunity for chiropractors and students across the country to make an impact in Washington, DC, and on the future of their profession. It's also a chance to network with DCs from other states and learn more about what's going on in the profession as a whole. Ask anyone who has been to NCLC before...it's worth the trip. More details about NCLC 2003 to come in upcoming ACA publications. For more information, call 800/986-4636 or visit www.acatoday.com. To make your room reservation, please call the Hyatt Regency Washington at 202/737-1234.

