

The Update

Volume 1
Issue 7
October 2009

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Anti-Chiropractic Movement Takes On Steam

By Judy Nutz Campanale, DC, ACP

Before you get all freaked out and organize some grassroots effort to do away with the grassroots effort against Chiropractic that seems to be establishing itself in Connecticut, stop and listen to another perspective on the matter.

If you are unfamiliar, there have been several noteworthy public campaigns against chiropractic over the last few years in the Northeast part of the country. In July 2005, a huge roadside billboard in Connecticut disconcertingly declared: "WARNING: Chiropractic Adjustments Can Kill or Permanently Disable You." The billboard, part of an ongoing effort by the Chiropractic Stroke Awareness Group (CSAG, www.neck911.com), was covered up after just one day but was resurrected in Massachusetts in late 2007 and early 2008.

In May of 2006, bus ads in Bridgeport and Waterbury, CT displayed side panel ads depicting a doctor in a white coat about to give a cervical adjustment to a patient. Huge letters across the sides and back of the buses read: "Injured by a chiropractic adjustment? Call 860-529-8826.

www.neck911usa.com Chiropractic Stroke Victims Awareness Group." A few months later, similar ads were seen in *The Washington Post*, which has a circulation of more than five million.

In September 2007, Victims of Chiropractic Abuse (VOCA) released two U.S. postage stamps to "promote awareness of the health hazards of chiropractic neck manipulation," according to the organization's founder who suffered a stroke that she believes was caused by chiropractic treatment. One stamp simply had VOCA's logo on it. The other had a photo of a woman whose paralysis was blamed on chiropractic manipulation and who later died during an operation to relieve some of the effects of her injuries.

Earlier this year, CSAG announced that it was dramatically expanding its nationwide advertising campaign with the placement of billboards in some of the largest metropolitan

areas in the country. A large billboard asking, "Are you aware there is a risk of stroke with chiropractic adjustment?" was placed at the intersection of 11th Ave and W. 57th Street in New York City and similar outdoor advertising was to be placed in Los Angeles, Dallas, Denver, and Cincinnati.

CSAG's website offers a compilation of fear-based messages and all the worst our profession has to offer. It includes videos and testimonials of people who claim to have been injured by chiropractic treatment. Listed on a "Victims" button is a ten-page list of people who suffered from "neck manipulation" from 400 B.C. to "recent years." Among its links for more information are the Canadian Orthopractic Manual Therapy Association for "guidelines on how to recognize safe and scientific manual therapy," ChiroWatch.com for "all you need to know about chiropractic," and the National Association for Chiropractic Medicine, "a consumer advocacy association of chiropractors who confine their scope of practice to scientific parameters and seek to make legitimate the utilization of professional manipulative procedures in mainstream health care delivery."

It also includes an article from 2006 announcing that the Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE), "the professional accrediting body for every chiropractic professional school in the United States," faces possible loss of recognition by the Department of Education. Interestingly, the article concludes that, "If unsuccessful in its bid to gain continued recognition, CCE would be the second chiropractic educational body to lose recognition with USDOE. In 1993 the Straight Chiropractic Academic Standards Association (SCASA) lost recognition after Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander determined it to be an unreliable judge of the quality of education in its programs."

To someone familiar with chiropractic, especially chiropractic politics, the site has

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an obvious slant. To someone not so well-versed or the average layperson, it may appear quite differently. Who could argue that someone who has been injured by any treatment or procedure does not have a legitimate right to speak up in an attempt to keep others from meeting the same fate? Is that not what prompted Barbara Loe Fisher to found the National Vaccine Information Center and what continues to drive her quest to increase awareness of the risks of vaccination?

While it remains uncertain who exactly is behind these groups, as no spokesperson could ever be reached for comment, it is entirely possible that these organizations were spearheaded, as they suggest on their websites, by a few people who suffered life-changing strokes following cervical manipulation. No matter who is responsible for such campaigns, the best way to respond is with integrity and information.

One of the links on the site offer "Some Guidelines for Choosing a Chiropractor." While it seems to single out "straight chiropractors" as undesirable, some of the information is noteworthy. The guidelines include some valid points that are not only worth your review but your serious consideration. What follows is taken directly from their website (in italics) with my comments added afterward (in plain text) for your deliberation.

Avoid: Chiropractors who insist that they are primary care doctors or suggest that MD's are simply against chiropractors because chiropractic treatment is somehow better than medicine. Chiropractic is not an alternative to medicine; nor is anything an alternative to chiropractic. It is something completely separate and unique. While what we do may resemble something other health professionals do, it is completely different both in philosophy and objective. Consequently, it is always completely inappropriate to compare ourselves to medical doctors. Whatever you think of medicine and medical doctors simply has nothing to do with your professional objective.

Avoid: Chiropractors who advise you not to have you children immunized. Because, as stated above, chiropractors are not in the business of medicine, it is not only inappropriate to compare ourselves or our methods to medicine but it is also outside our field of expertise and simply dangerous to give medical advice (i.e., whether to take or avoid medications or medical procedures).

Avoid: Chiropractors who use scare tactics to solicit for business such as preaching that "vertebral subluxations are silent killers"... Why is it that most chiropractors abhor the use of scare tactics by medical doctors but find it completely acceptable to do themselves?

Avoid: Chiropractors who promise to prevent

disease through regular check-ups and manipulations. Of all the differences chiropractors have, this is one of the most critical. Those of us who use a non-therapeutic approach work hard to help people understand that chiropractic adjustments are not a panacea. The matter that makes up our body has very definite limitations and, even under the best of circumstances, will eventually cease to function perfectly. Seriously, in the end we all die and regular adjustments are not going to change that. Consequently, the right thing to do is be honest. That is, you are always better off without nerve interference. And the clearer you keep your nerve system, the better your body can function and perform.

Avoid: Chiropractors who offer to sell you expensive nutritional supplements or other remedies, which they profit from. Honestly, who trusts anyone that is selling things that they are profiting from? We don't trust medical research when it is supported by pharmaceutical companies. We don't trust used car salesmen or encyclopedia salesmen. Why would anyone trust a chiropractor who is doing the same thing? People don't and that is not only sad for the individual chiropractor but it damages the reputation of our profession as a whole.

Avoid: Chiropractors who believe spinal manipulation is treatment for disease, infection or as a method of preventing ill health. (Or if a chiropractor refers to himself as a "straight" chiropractor.) Herein lies a critical lesson for us all. Many chiropractors who call themselves "straight" chiropractors do not adhere to the non-therapeutic approach. This has misled the public into thinking that straight chiropractors are those who treat all disease (as compared to the other kind of chiropractors who focus solely on musculoskeletal complaints).

The public needs to understand our approach to chiropractic. It is the approach that is separate and distinct. It is the approach that when utilized on an ongoing regular basis allows the body to function in a more harmonious manner. It is the approach which does not offend or encroach upon medical territory. It is the approach that is honest and just makes sense for everyone. It is growing ever more important that you educate your practice members and your community at large about exactly what chiropractors do if we are to impact the population the way we have always hoped we would with our message of lifetime vertebral subluxation correction for everyone.

Judy Nutz Campanale, DC, ACP, is a Past President of the FSCO and currently serves on the Board of Directors. She practices in Levittown, PA at the Strauss Chiropractic Center, which is widely recognized as one of the longest-standing, high-volume, cash practices in the country. She has been honored with numerous awards including the FSCO Chiropractor of the Year and Sherman College of Straight Chiropractic Chiropractor of the Year (the first woman ever to receive either of these awards). She received her ACP in 2008.