Editorial

Building a team of champion chiropractors

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Being a successful health care provider in these difficult economic times is a challenge for even “best of class” clinicians. Many people, including doctors, have seen their life savings shrink or even entirely disappear. This time of unrest and worry about the future reaches beyond our own immediate personal needs, wants, and dreams. Many people are sincerely concerned about the country as a whole. Some of the best doctors I know are shaking their heads wondering, “What is next?” After being battled by managed care, increased overhead, and lower net revenues, our confidence in the overall economy and the business of health care has dropped to all-time lows.

Other concerns are also present, including concerns about the future growth or even the survival of the chiropractic profession. You must admit that it would be a daunting challenge to be just now emerging from a chiropractic college looking for opportunities to create a new successful chiropractic business. When established chiropractic practices are experiencing flat or declining growth, it makes it that much harder to succeed for the uninitiated who enter this volatile atmosphere.

The secret is also out. Doctors of chiropractic do help people. We may have been disgruntled as a profession in

the past to be not as well recognized as we wished to be. Although we still may not be fully recognized, the services that we provide are in demand. The question is who will be providing the service? There are many types of health care providers who have either rekindled an old interest or developed a new interest in performing manipulations or adjustive procedures.

The biggest competitive threat will most likely come from physical therapists. Physical therapists are organized, well trained, supported by multiple institutions, and likely to expand their direct patient access as they restructure their educational programs to doctor of physical therapy programs.¹ The physical therapists have well-developed short- and long-term plans that are largely embraced by their profession. Their efforts focus on these 5 areas: professionalism, direct access, the doctor of physical therapy degree, evidence-based practice, and practitioner of choice.² We could learn from their ability to create a game plan and having the courage to carry the plan into action. Our physical therapy colleagues also get the big picture. They understand the critical role that professionalism plays in the development of a profession, succinctly stated by recognized educator and researcher Julie Fritz, PT, PhD, ATC, “Professions, such as physical therapy, and individual practitioners lose (or fail to gain) autonomy when they fail to meet society’s expectations of professionalism.”³

We may indeed be entering one of the most challenging times in the history of chiropractic. There

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is no doubt that, on the other side of this challenging time, we will still be standing. The question is where we will be standing? Will the profession finally find a common voice and work together to meet the challenges before us? Paraphrasing President Barack Obama's inauguration speech, the challenges our country faces are real, serious, and many. We should choose to follow his next piece of advice and choose hope over fear, and unity of purpose over conflict and discord. It will take guts and plenty of hard work. I think we are up to the challenge; and perhaps, we are about to finally become proactive instead of reactive or, for our sports-minded friends, anabolic instead of catabolic.

When met with substantial challenges, we need to find the teammates to help us move over, through, or around the obstacles in our path. The American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians (ACBSP) certificants are the teammates who can help get the job done. They are dedicated, hard-working, lifelong learners who have taken the path less traveled. They have worked in life to become something more. They are the sort of people you turn to when you need help from someone you trust. They are predictable in that they provide positive, consistent, and desirable outcomes.

If we are going to make sustainable and positive changes in our own personal life and our profession, we will need to identify likeminded partners who we can work with to make positive and sustainable change take place. The ACBSP is a gathering place for those people who are champions in their own lives. A friend of mine asked me, "What if you had a number of partners who you could truly say were champions in their own life? How might that affect yours?"⁴ I agree; we can become champions when we associate with others who have already achieved champion status. You consistently find these types of people when chiropractic and sport come together.

What are some answers to these questions? One answer is the ACBSP is creating marketing tools for our certificants who are professional, honest, and representative of the great doctors that the ACBSP represents and certifies. The ACBSP is also offering position stands to the entire health care profession as a whole. The most recent effort, which was recently published, details recommendations of physical activity for individuals with spinal curvature.⁵ Each ACBSP diplomate has contributed, along with many others, to the body of literature that defines chiropractic. We

invite you to join us by submitting your abstracts and manuscripts to the ACBSP and the *Journal of Chiropractic Medicine*.

I believe Dr Scott Haldeman had it right when he said, "Cultural authority is derived from competence and social legitimacy."⁶ Our clinical and professional competence is built upon the foundational cornerstones of professionalism, science, advanced training, and outcome-oriented care. These are the exact principles that the ACBSP endorses and the ones we should use in each interaction with our patients.

There is no doubt that it really is easy to stand on the sideline and throw stones at what others are doing. Many a benchwarmer has embraced this attitude. It will take an organized effort to move our profession forward, onward, and upward. Our profession must continue to develop and grow beyond the needs, wants, and dreams of single individuals. Together, we can make a needed difference—right now—through collaborative efforts that are built to meet a common vision for our profession's future. We will continue to have our critics, as we always have; but we also have the real opportunity to build additional allies from across the spectrum of health care through the repeated demonstration of consistent, predictable, and positive behaviors. Actions need be taken that are not easily achieved or that do not simply stroke downstream with the current. For chiropractic to carry on, we must develop as a profession; only then will we find our pace in the long run toward success, not only for ourselves, but also for those that follow.

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