

THE PIVOT REVIEW

Joseph B. Strauss, D.C., F.C.S.C., Editor Volume 20 • Number 2 • January 2005

piv'ot (piv'ut) n. 1. a point, fixed pin, or short axis on the end of which something turns. 3. That upon or around which something turns or depends; the central, cardinal, or crucial factor, member, part, person, etc.

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Paradigm Shift

The editor of The Journal of Vertebral Subluxation Research has recently written a very interesting article concerning the status of our profession with regard to public acceptance of chiropractic titled "What Paradigm Shift?" He says that most of the speakers at a "chiropractic pep rally" are telling us "the public wants what we have to offer" and "there has never been a better time to be a chiropractor" and that "the public is flocking to us." His conclusion is that these speakers, and those of us who would listen to them, and believe them are totally divorced from reality. He cites the government, supposedly against nationalized medicine, giving billions of dollars for drug care and vaccines despite the fact that health care premiums average \$9,068 for a family in 2003. He goes on to quote other statistics

and facts to support his position, that the American public is just as addicted to the medical model of disease care as it always was, despite the impact of health maintenance measures. We are a medicine-therapeutic-oriented society and we are generally becoming more so each year. Children are starting earlier with medications and we are becoming more and more obese every year. The average American is 25 lbs heavier today than he was in 1966 indicating that we are really not health conscious.

Another well-known chiropractic columnist has recently noted in a national publication that enrollments are down considerably in chiropractic colleges, the failure rate of chiropractors in practice may be as high as 50%, and if the trend continues, there will be more chiropractors retiring from practice than entering practice, meaning our numbers will be decreasing. Why the decrease in enrollments? The JVSR author says, "Gone are the days when the majority are there because of a per-

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sonal life-changing event that followed a chiropractic adjustment.” A good percentage of chiropractic students have never been to a chiropractor before enrolling in chiropractic college.

Here’s the problem. Most young people going into chiropractic are doing so strictly as a career decision and chiropractic, as a career, is looking less and less every day like a good career move, especially in light of the ever-increasing time and money it takes to get through the education program. Further, with few exceptions, the days of chiropractic as a second career are gone, especially knowing what the average income is. If prospective students knew what the failure rate in practice was, I believe enrollment would drop 50%. With just a bachelors degree many in the pharmaceutical industry can **start** at \$30-40,000 a year more than the average chiropractor **after** building a practice!

As I read, I was really appreciating this editor’s insight, his honesty in telling it like it is, and his willingness to criticize the “chiropractic pep rally” types who are describing chiropractic through “rose-colored glasses.” I started thinking “this guy is too good to be true”--and he was. How could this man be so attuned to the reality of the situation yet be so divorced from reality with his solution? His answer to the problem: Research. Now I know that right away I am going to be branded as one of those “anti-research, faith-based philosophers.” Well, let me make it clear that I am not against research. But I am also not so divorced from the reality of the present chiropractic plight to think that research is the answer.

There is nothing we are doing now that will be improved by research. The one thing that we have researched over the years and the one thing we can say research has shown is that we are more effective and more cost efficient in “treating” back pain than is orthodox medicine. The allopaths have just taken over that area and they have the technology and the use of drugs to make them even more efficient than us. The author suggests our research needs to be in proving that vertebral subluxations cause all kinds of “negative health outcomes.” He is writing for a traditional chiropractic publication so he uses a euphemism for disease and says we need to prove that “the positive health outcomes (another euphemism for “getting sick people well”) we associate with (subluxation’s) reduction actually exist.” In other words, we need to keep going in the traditional reductionist, Palmer model of one-cause and one-cure for disease.

Yes, we need to do research, but researching and proving that chiropractic adjustments will more effectively cure XYZ disease than will medicine is not the answer. It will take us another 100 years to prove we can cure a few diseases and we will be gone as a profession long before that. Even if we were successful, the allopaths, osteopaths, physical therapists and who knows who else, would just start competing as they do now with back pain.

Research is great but it is not the answer to the problems in this profession. While we are discussing research, the idea of researching better, more effective ways to locate, analyze and correct vertebral subluxation is also not the answer to growing our profession or its ac-

ceptance. Every chiropractor has had hundreds, perhaps thousands of practice members who have had their subluxations corrected and never returned for regular care and never referred in another person. Yes, we should be researching better methods to accomplish our objective of correcting vertebral subluxations but that is not the answer to universal acceptance. The answer is to find a niche, find an area which is not being addressed by any other profession, preferably one that all other professions by their very nature cannot address. I believe that niche is correcting vertebral subluxation, not to treat, cure, or prevent disease but to enable the unresearchable innate intelligence of the body to be expressed more fully. Will that put us outside the scientific/research/medical model fraternity? Probably. Is that important? Does it matter? Well, if you are looking to impress the scientific/research/medical model community, it matters. But if you are interested in providing a non-duplicative **and** non-duplicable service to humanity and you are interested in seeing the profession survive and thrive, then it may be the very last thing we should worry about doing. ▲

If you have no practice objective, chiropractic is pretty much anything you want it to be.

Prophecy

The beginning of every new year is rife with prophecies about the coming year. While they are often interesting to read, no one really pays too much attention to them, which is good because most never come true or they are really only generalities. I believe that there has not been a legitimate prophecy since 96AD. I also believe that there are historical trends which can be mistaken for prophecy and these trends can tell us something about the future. I am not a prophet but I think that after observing this profession as a student and chiropractor for over 40 years and writing about it for over 20 years, I am in a position to see some historical trends. These trends could change overnight just as the trends of the US changed drastically after 9-11. Still, all things being equal, it's likely that the following will occur:

Education. The decrease in enrollments at chiropractic colleges will likely continue. Some schools will be hard pressed to continue and will probably go the route of the "health universities," adding acupuncture, oriental medicine and homeopathy to attract students. I would not be surprised if a very well-known chiropractic college went that route, one that only a few years ago would not possibly have taken that route. It should also not come as a surprise if one or two chiropractic schools closed in the next few years. At the

same time, chiropractic education will continue to increase in its depth and breadth of medical information. Those who believed in the mid-60's that chiropractic education should be longer and more medical have passed from the scene but their thinking is still prevalent and still dictates the content and hence the length of a chiropractic education.

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Professional Organization. The national associations will continue to struggle for membership. We have created a reverse JFK-mindset that says, "It's not what you can do for your national organization, it's what your national organization can do for you." Frankly, national organizations are able to do less but chiropractors are looking for them to do more and more. The only thing that keeps state organizations "healthy" is they are more attuned to the needs of the local chiropractor and are able to address those needs on a state level.

The Chiropractic Profession as a Whole. Generally, I believe that the chiropractic profession will become more and more polarized. This is a trend that reaches into all

strata of society. It becomes quite obvious in our national elections. This country is divided on its views and more important on its values. That polarization will be reflected more and more in the chiropractic profession. There has recently been talk about "two professions" i.e., splitting this profession. Most of the talk has come from the mixer-oriented side.

But that is all that it is, talk. It will not come about ever, not in my opinion. In fact, I do not believe the discussion, especially the articles appearing in a national publication by leaders of two "liberal schools," is even sincere. The purpose of their dis-

cussion, which on the surface appears to be polarizing, is intended to do just the opposite. Their desire is to draw the profession together, to make everyone take one side or the other. At this point we have probably four or five professions. These writers themselves have no ability to grasp the larger concept of non-therapeutic, objective straight chiropractic so they believe that its philosophy is out of the mainstream of chiropractic thinking and will be rejected by the vast majority of the profession. If the profession were asked to choose one side or the other, either the Janse model of the 60's or the B.J. model of the 20's, they believe that 90% of the chiropractic profession would choose the former. I am inclined to think that

they are correct. As much as we maintain that most chiropractors do not want to prescribe drugs, and they probably do not, I don't think many would be opposed to other chiropractors doing it. If they were forced to choose between being identified with non-therapeutic chiropractors or drug-prescribing chiropractors, they would choose the latter because they have the same objective, just a different means. Further complicating this "polarization" is the fact that the traditional or B.J. chiropractor (chiropractic gets sick people well... vertebral subluxation is the cause of all disease) realizes he is not an OSC or non-therapeutic chiropractor and neither group wants to be associated with the other. So even the 10% is divided. Those mixers calling for a split are counting on this. They do not want a divided profession or two professions. They want to destroy any and every semblance of straight chiropractic. That is, has been, and will always be their one goal. They will use any means to do it, whether it is destroying or changing our educational programs, controlling the state boards or controlling the profession.

Objective, non-therapeutic straight chiropractic. I believe the future of non-therapeutic straight chiropractic is bright. Clearly, the idea of correcting vertebral subluxations so that the body can work at its maximum potential is not something that will attract the world to your door. Nothing will do that. If you had an absolute cure for cancer the whole world would not beat a path to your door, only those with cancer. But I think that compared with other approaches to chiropractic, the objective straight approach has the best future. Not everyone has a back problem and many that do will seek other alternatives instead of chiropractic. Not everyone is interested in doing all they can to maximize their life, but many will, I believe enough to support our entire profession so I'm sure it is enough to support those who choose non-therapeutic straight chiropractic. It will not be easy for non-therapeutic straight chiropractors. It is becoming more and more difficult to reach people with this message when so many chiropractors are presenting a much different message.

Unless objective straight chiropractors develop more ways to educate the public and utilize the present tools, not to mention create

more they will struggle to build practices. The public needs to be saturated with this different and logical message about chiropractic before they begin to accept it. That will not happen with the small one-on-one efforts of the local straight chiropractor. Nor will it happen if the chiropractor depends upon practice members to refer people into the office.

Non-therapeutic straight chiropractic will continue to be a small group of chiropractors with less and less effect and impact upon society outside of individual practices unless they become an organized group with specific plans and programs to impact the schools, attract new practitioners and reach those who are dissatisfied with their present form of practice.

Overall, the future of chiropractic is neither good nor bad. It depends upon the thinking and the actions of chiropractors. That is why these are not prophecies. Prophecies predict what **will** happen. Historical trends predict what will happen if the current thinking and current actions continue. It is up to us to establish the future of this profession and of our approach to its practice. ▲

Where's the Vision?

Recently, an Objective Straight Chiropractic (OSC) antagonist who has a good understanding of objective straight chiropractic philosophy wanted to know what our vision was. It got me thinking, "Where would we like to go with this profession?" In a real sense, we have no vision, no clear picture of where we would like to see OSC in 10 years, even 5 years from now. We are convinced that it is the most

superior way to practice chiropractic, which is an interesting position to take in light of a few facts. It obviously is not the most lucrative approach to chiropractic, for you essentially are asking people to pay for care out of their pocket. Many of these people have insurance coverage and would prefer to use that for care. It is also not the easiest way to build a practice. If you can tell people that vertebral sublux-

ation is the cause of all disease and that you correct the cause of all disease, that would undoubtedly bring in more people (at least until they find out that their diseases do not disappear).

Why do so many of us, okay a few of us, choose to practice this way? I can only speak for myself. It is because for me, it is the right way to practice. It is congruent with my values and beliefs and vi-

sion of life. It seems to me to be the most reasonable and logical approach to chiropractic. It gives me a sense of professional fulfillment. Yet, I also realize that those things are not the motivation nor are they satisfying to everyone. So we expect that our numbers are not going to be that great, that we will never have a universal acceptance of our type of practice, either among the profession or among the public. Further, it is not the easiest manner in which to practice. Trying to make our message clear to everyone is hard work, especially knowing that a good percentage of people will reject our message and we will, in a sense, have wasted our time and energy. The greater the challenge, though, the greater the reward. When you realize that someone has gotten the big idea of subluxation correction for a better life, you also realize that you have changed someone's perspective of life itself. They will begin to look at and think about a lot of things differently, i.e., from an ADIO perspective. That's a part of the objective straight chiropractic philosophy and that is no small thing.

So where is the vision? More important, who and where are the people with a vision? What is their vision? There are no new Reggie Golds on the scene, at least not in my limited view. It takes a unique person to be so imbued with the philosophy not to waiver or compromise it and to also be extremely articulate and motivational. Any young chiropractors who might fill that role are busy trying to make a living, get out of debt and build a practice. Not only are there no apparent Reggies on the scene, there does not appear to be

any new Thom Gelardis appearing either, men with a vision to change the educational direction of the profession to reflect the objective straight chiropractic, non-therapeutic approach to practice. I seriously doubt whether we could create a new school even if there was such a man as Thom among the young chiropractors. Both of these men came at just the right time with just the right abilities and personalities to bring about this movement. Further, they had a core group of "converts" to this type of practice. Those men are passing from the scene. So we really have no one expressing a vision as to where we want this approach to be 5 or 10 years from now. Even if we did, we have no strong leaders to take us there or at least willing to step up to the plate and get the movement going. We have no schools that focus solely on this type of practice, only a few that accept it among other approaches. We have no national organization committed entirely to the perpetuation of non-therapeutic, objective straight chiropractic and, to the best of my knowledge, only one state organization. At best, we have a small group of solid thinking, but non-organized, people with no one to assume the role of organizer. We have a number of potential leaders but no one seems to want to step out and take the risk of a Reggie or a Thom. I am not faulting them, just making an observation.

So where is our vision? It is in the hearts of individual chiropractors and it mostly involves their own practices. When the young generation fulfills that personal, private practice vision, I believe they will begin to see a greater vision for non-therapeutic straight

chiropractic. This wonderful principle we have and wonderful service we perform just naturally should rise to a greater level of benefit to mankind. Meanwhile the Foundation will continue to make a small contribution to that future vision and hopefully play a small part in educating those potential visionaries and leaders while they develop their vision.▲

Science has no principle, therefore it can never come to a knowledge of truth, but merely demonstrate facts.

The assumption that all the facts we have are all that are necessary to come to a knowledge of truth sufficient to precipitate action is arrogance.

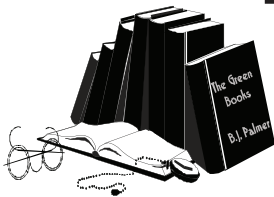
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