

## WHERE IS CHIROPRACTIC GOING?

By Dr. Derek Conte

In 1895, D.D. Palmer put Harvey Lillard, on an examination bench and noticed his vertebrae were misaligned. Lillard had been complaining of near total deafness since he had felt a "POP" in his back when bending over, 17 years before. Palmer had the inspiration that the spine held the key to Lillard's problem and used his hands to move the bone back into place. A few days later, Lillard's hearing was almost completely restored and chiropractic (Greek: to do by hand) was born. It was that simple; that brilliant. And so, chiropractic grew up around the idea that illness was related to dysfunction of the nervous system. In a world of commercials selling drugs for every ailment, chiropractic can be hard to grasp, but its long term growth over 116 years speaks powerfully to its effectiveness.

In the beginning, many chiropractors were sent to jail for "practicing medicine without a license," and once in jail, the chiropractors began adjusting the inmates! These were brave men and didn't see themselves as medical doctors, but chiropractors, offering a new way to bring health to the public. Even today, chiropractors are faced with notions of quackery and skepticism. But more and more, there is recognition that chiropractic is a solid and separate health discipline, even among medical professionals who refer patients to us and are even our patients themselves. This is very gratifying and builds collaboration for the benefit of all. Unfortunately, chiropractic's future direction is in doubt.

Recently, there has been a movement within the ranks of chiropractic itself to model patient care along the lines of traditional Western medicine. The representatives of this model propose that

chiropractors be given the legal right to prescribe drugs to their patients and be called, "chiropractic physicians" or "medical chiropractors". This concerns many traditional chiropractors because reliance on drugs to improve patient symptoms can erode the



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very art and science of chiropractic and be lost forever. It would be, they reason, much easier to offer medications than to confront the problem causing the complaint. The osteopathic profession, once as distinct as chiropractic, adopted the medical orientation years ago and has lost much of what made it distinct from medicine. This is

not to say that osteopaths do not help thousands of people in their medical capacity, but their original mission has been submerged by a method, not their own originally. It must be understood too that chiropractors are against the medication and over-medication of conditions in cases that could be handled naturally and refer patients to their medical counterparts when necessary, without reservation.

At a conference this month, a leader in a major chiropractic institution addressing his audience said (paraphrasing) 'we really don't know what we're doing (in chiropractic) or whether it works or not...' and 'chiropractors should be prescribing drugs because that is what people expect from doctors'. This is an embarrassment to those of us who worked so hard in school and in practice to give people a drugless alternative path to wellness. I, for one, wish to honor the tradition of hands-on patient care.

*Dr. Derek Conte is co-founder of Chiropractic Specialists on Concord Rd. in Smyrna. For questions, call: 404-784-6008 or visit Facebook: Chiropractor Smyrna Ga | Derek Conte DC*