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"It's Where You Put the Period"

By James W. Healey, DC

Mixers and straights cannot possibly agree on all things. That's obvious. If they did, there would be only one school of thought in chiropractic based on those things. Some will argue that there's really only one and that anything else is actually something other than chiropractic. But the fact remains that there are different concepts of what chiropractic is, which presently contributes to some problems for the profession and those differences remain largely misunderstood.

There are significant differences between straight chiropractic, conservative mixing chiropractic, and liberal mixing chiropractic. Conserving mixing and liberal mixing differ primarily according to how much medical technique and/or how little chiropractic-like technique is tolerated. Let's examine this. These are at opposite ends of the mixing chiropractic spectrum. The objective of each is to treat the patient's diagnosed ailment. The preferred choice of the method or technique will distinguish the conservative from the liberal. The conservative mixer tends to favor the manipulation as the treatment of choice and tends to be intolerant of the methods more closely associated with medicine such as invasive procedures, treatment machinery, etc. The most conservative of them could be considered "hands-only" mixers. The liberal mixer tends to be less restrictive with the treatment methods.

Remember, this is a comparison of mixer to mixer, not mixer to straight. Unfortunately, though since it has perpetuated confusion, this is the most common misunderstanding which has arisen. Straight or mixer is not determined by whether or not machines or modalities are used. It is determined by the objective or goal with whatever procedure is used. Even though the conservative mixer prefers to manipulate by hand and the liberal mixer may use manipulation for certain conditions, that does not mean they are practicing straight chiropractic at the time if the goal is the treatment of the patient's diagnosed ailment. With straight chiropractic the adjustment happens to be what best suits the objective of correcting subluxations.

Bob Berkowitz, D.C., practices straight chiropractic here in New Jersey. He is wonderfully successful and talented in so many ways, including his ability to make things easily understandable. I want to acknowledge him here for allowing me to use his original thinking in his expression of a way in which conservative mixers differ from straights: "It's where you put the period."

It seems as if these groups can agree on certain fundamental things. Simplified, they can agree that with regards to the body, structure is related to and affects function. They can agree that abnormal structure is related to and affects abnormal function. The straight recognizes subluxation as an example of abnormal structure which effects abnormal functional states and for that reason is worthy of the corrective attention of the adjustment. Period.

The conservative mixer recognizes subluxation as an example of abnormal structure which is the cause of abnormal functional states which may be expressed as symptoms. The symptoms then must be monitored and a diagnosis made in order to know whether the patient should be manipulated or referred. Period. The conservative mixer, in delaying the period, makes a mixing leap to recognizing the symptom as the reason for care and the subluxation as the cause. Since symptoms may be a result of either abnormal function or of normal functional responses to stresses at the limits of adaptation, monitoring them to determine normalcy is a guess, at best. Also, abnormal function may result from something other than subluxation. To assume that the "cause" is corrected with a manipulation is equally a guess. The logic of this thinking is seriously flawed.

If, however, you can agree that subluxation is the reason for care because it alters function, whether or not it results in symptoms, then you can agree that it alone is its reason for correcting it. And you can agree with straight chiropractic. Period.

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