



*Dynamic Chiropractic* – February 15, 1991, Vol. 09, Issue 04

## **We Get Letters**

### **Quackery in Chiropractic**

Dear Editor:

The recent editorial suggestion (*Dynamic Chiropractic*, January 18, 1991, p. 22) that American Chiropractic Association (ACA) President Charles F. Downing, D.C.'s letter to "Dear Abby" has "picked clean the last vestiges of doubt about chiropractic and 'quackery'" is absurd. The so-called "quackery myth about chiropractic" is no myth. If anyone doubts the continuity of quackery in the profession, he has only to turn to pages 31 and 35 of the same issue of *Dynamic Chiropractic*.

On page 31, *Dynamic Chiropractic* has published Dr. Robert E. Connolly's advertisement for "my proven psoriasis treatment" and his unsubstantiated claim that "psoriasis can be cured" by his methods. Dr. Connolly also notes that his cure will increase doctors' income substantially. He offers several testimonials to buttress his therapeutic claims. Page 36 reveals that James F. Dorobiala, D.C.'s Ten Minute Cure for the Common Cold has made it to the Motion Palpation Institute's (MPI's) "Preferred Reading and Viewing List." This "definitive work" on "The Cure and Management of the Common Cold" is available for a mere \$75.

Wow! Cures for psoriasis and the common cold. Sure sounds like Nobel Prize winning stuff. A search of scientific sources (*Chiropractic Research Abstracts Collection*, *Index Medicus*), however, paints a very different picture. My scan of the literature reveals no experimental evidence from Drs. Connolly or Dorobiala to substantiate the wild claims made in these advertisements. Rather, these advertisements amount to for-profit promotion of unproven health remedies and thereby clearly meet the criteria<sup>1,2</sup> of quackery.

I pick on Drs. Connolly and Dorobiala because their advertisements so clearly amount to "quackery" that they are easy to document. But the kernels of quackery (i.e., unsubstantiated and untested health remedies offered as "proven") are ubiquitous in this profession.<sup>3,4</sup> I dare say that health misinformation (if not

quackery) can be found in just about any issue of any chiropractic trade publication (and some of our research journals) and much of the promotional materials chiropractors disseminate to patients. the recent unsubstantiated claims of the ACA are exemplary.

"Chiropractic procedure not only corrects athletic injury but also enables your body to operate at peak efficiency without the use of drugs or medication" (ACA pamphlet #ST-3, 1990) and,

"Chiropractic is a drugless, non-surgical method of procedure which has been proven effective for improving performance" (ACA pamphlet #ST-4, 1990).

Perhaps the most unfortunate aspect of this tradition of unsubstantiated claims is that those chiropractic remedies which may, in fact, be helpful to patients (i.e., safe and effective) go untested and discredited because of the profession's willingness to promote them with nary a shred of experimental evidence.

It escapes me entirely how Dr. Downing, the ACA, MPI, and Dynamic Chiropractic can suggest that there is no quackery in chiropractic. Either these groups and individuals do not read the chiropractic literature or have no crap-detectors. I urge a reconsideration of advertising and promotion policies in chiropractic.

#### *References*

1. Jarvis, W. "What Constitutes Quackery?" NCAHF Newsletter 1989, July/August: 4-5.
2. Pepper Committee. "Quackery: a \$10 billion Scandal" U.S. House of Representatives, Comm. Pub. 1984; No. 98-435.
3. Keating, J.C. "Making Claims." Journal of Manipulative & Physiological Therapeutics (JMPT) April 1988; 11(2):75-7.
4. Keating, J.C. "Traditional Barriers to Standards of Knowledge Production in Chiropractic. Chiropractic Technique September 1990; 2(3): 78-85.

*Joseph C. Keating Jr., Ph.D.*

*Associate Professor*

*Palmer College of Chiropractic/West*

*Sunnyvale, California*



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