

Victims again? Who is the problem?

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“Alfred Russell Wallace, a contemporary of Charles Darwin, was in his laboratory observing an Emperor butterfly trying to get free from its cocoon. The struggle was intense, with life-or-death consequences. He wondered, “What would happen if I assisted in the process?” So with a knife he made a slit down the length of the cocoon. This is what happened, in his words: “The butterfly emerged, spread its wings, drooped perceptibly and died. The pain

and intensity of the struggle had been denied it, and it had failed to grow. It could not emerge into the world with the strength it needed to survive.”¹

Dr. Scott Peck’s, famous opening line in *The Road Less Traveled* was, “Life is difficult” to which he added, “Life is complex” in *The Road Less Traveled & Beyond*. He reminds us to learn to deal with life’s conflicts, problems, and paradoxes to find the true simplicity that lies on the other side of complexity.²

Like the Emperor butterfly, the chiropractic profession is going through an intense struggle with life and death consequences. Akin to the Emperor butterfly, I believe we will successfully emerge accepting our struggles over the last year as essential to our evolution. We will learn to accept that our lives will continue to be difficult and complex. It is then that we will begin to understand what life is about.

Albeit, we convince ourselves that the victim role serves our best interests. It allows us to do little or nothing about our conditions and at other times we actually believe that we will be rescued. For example, we say: “If the public really knew our story they would correct the wrongs that have been done”, or, “If the press was on our side things would be far different”, or “Until all chiropractors think and practice as I do, our problems will never be over.”

Each of us has been driven into victim hood by the chaos of the last year. The actions of the antagonistic physicians, health care cuts and restrictions on our role to practice are only three of numerous events that have impacted us. When looking at issues through ‘a new pair of glasses’, that of evolutionary change rather than as victims, a realization occurs that these event were all necessary for our development and growth when we choose to react to them differently. Mark Twain said, “We have two types of people, victims and warriors”. A quick review of three events of this last year is intended to take us beyond our victim role.

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The political system

Health care issues are being reconstructed and life as a health care provider will be remolded almost on a daily basis. The case provided is an example of where a positive action resulted.

MANITOBA: In a highly significant and uncharacteristic move, the Provincial Government of Manitoba reversed an earlier decision that denied payment for chiropractic services to anyone under the age of nineteen. The reversal of the controversial policy signals an important victory for chiropractic in that the completely unworkable and prejudicial restriction of reimbursement for younger patients has been rescinded.³

Although some provinces have had ‘across the board cuts’ in provincial funding, there are an emerging number of chiropractors being appointed to provincial advisory boards that can help educate the uninformed. The process is changing. Health care decisions in the future will be based more on the advice of advisory boards and data provided rather than in our political relationships. The victim response is ‘poor me’ while the opportunist sees evolutionary change and prepares for it through responsible representation and facts.

Insurance: providers of chiropractic benefits

Aetna Insurance in their Coverage Policy Bulletins Number 0107 – Chiropractic Services.

Policy – Aetna covers chiropractic services, subject to any applicable benefit limitations and exclusions, when ALL of the following criteria are met:

1. Chiropractic care is either a covered benefit under the plan, there is an optional rider that covers chiropractic care, or coverage of chiropractic care is mandated by state law; and
2. The patient has a neuro-muscular disorder; and
3. The medical necessity for treatment is clearly documented; and
4. Improvement is documented within the initial 2 weeks of chiropractic care.

If no improvement is documented within the initial 2 weeks, additional chiropractic treatment is not medically necessary and is not covered unless the chiropractic treatment is modified.

If no improvement is documented within 30 days despite modification of chiropractic treatment, continued chiropractic treatment is not considered medically necessary and is not covered.

Once the maximum therapeutic benefit has been achieved, continuing care is not considered medically necessary and thus is not covered.

Chiropractic manipulation in asymptomatic patients or in patients without an identifiable clinical condition is considered not medically necessary and is not covered.

Chiropractic care in patients whose condition is neither regressing or improving, is considered not medically necessary and is not covered...⁴

The full document is eight pages in length and includes techniques not covered and a listing of conditions commonly treated by a chiropractor. The above policy is based on 89 references. Check <http://www.aetna.com/cpb/data/PrtCPBA0107.html>.

“The defining of the scope of chiropractic services is being taken from us”, is the cry of the victim. Who better can say “what we do,” and, “who we are” than ourselves? Our guidelines in the past were self-serving articles and failed to gain the acceptance, respect or support of the stakeholders. Guidelines such as the Aetna Policy, CARF and other documents are becoming the standards of chiropractic care. The CCA recognizes the weakness of our numerous guidelines and has seized the opportunity to rewrite our standards again. When this is completed in a responsible manner, our scope of practice will be a document upon which others can rely and build upon. The external guidelines have been a catalyst, with some of their efforts benefiting our new guideline and standards.

The press

Carey testifies that reports by neurologists “exaggerating” the danger of strokes caused by chiropractic treatment have scared away so many patients that some practitioners have been forced to leave the profession. Other chiropractors report they are losing 15 to 30 percent of their incomes, Carey testified. The impact has cost Canada’s 6,000 chiropractors an estimated \$100 million dollars in the last 18 months he said.⁵

Without question, becoming a victim happens very quickly when large amounts of money are lost but there have also been many very positive benefits during this stroke issue to consider. This is not the time to list them.

As the inquest continues, more positive and supportive issues will be brought forth. At the conclusion of the inquest I would like to see these issues brought forth by those closely involved which could be a detailed historical recording of this evolution. I am looking forward with great anticipation to reading about this fast tracking time in our profession.

Our professional turf

This is an area that can put many of us into victim hood. We all share a common belief that chiropractic's place/role is the adjusting/manipulating of the spine. The following is a summary from a literature review dealing with cervical manipulation. "One must weigh the effectiveness of this treatment against the relative risks for each specific patient surrounding cervical spine manipulation prior to using it as a treatment technique. Rivett stated that based upon the current outcome of risk verses benefit, evidence supports the continued judicial use of cervical-spine manipulation when applied by a prudent, properly trained

physical therapist".⁶ The ownership of our birthright cannot be settled in the courts; rather we gain position through our proficiency and research. Striving to do what we do best is the answer that will keep us from becoming victims.

What we are experiencing is our evolution and there is good to be seen in it.

References

- 1 Arthur Caliendo, Simple Steps-Ten Things You Can Do To Create an Exceptional Life, McGraw-Hill, 2000, p.185.
- 2 Scott Peck, The Road Less Travelled & Beyond, Simon and Schuster, 1997, Flap.
- 3 Ronald Hendrickson, The Chiropractic Choice, September, 2002, p.10.
- 4 Aetna, coverage Policy Bulletin Number 0107 Subject Chiropractic Services.
- 5 Peter Small, The Toronto Star 22.10.2002 p. B4.
- 6 Clubb D. Cervical manipulation and vertebral artery injury: a literature review. J Manual & Manipulative Therapies 2002; 10(1):15-16.

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