

Research – preparing for tomorrow!

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There is an old African proverb that says “tomorrow belongs to the people that prepare for it today.” In the ever changing dynamic we call health care, it requires great vision and insight to take the first steps to prepare our profession for its place. The profession that has the research to back up its claims in evidence based health care, will not only succeed, but thrive. We live in a society where every dollar spent on health care is scrutinized; by government based health care delivery, third party payers

and our patients are also becoming savvy conscious consumers. Information is at the fingertip. One simple click tells our patients how well the treatment protocols we are advising and the therapy we are administering are backed up by research, or which protocols have not yet been tested through the scientific method. I know this will probably upset a few. Some will shout foul and complain that much of health care in general has not been put through such methodology; however the difference lies in the credibility of each profession.

Whether we like it or not, there are other professions that seem to be above reproach. We, as a profession do not have that luxury. Rather, we have had to prove and demonstrate what we do is not only effective but backed by concrete evidence. In the past few years, I have had the privilege of attending both the WFC conference in Montreal and the National Convention in Toronto. I have witnessed the tremendous amount of research that has come forward, as well as the increasing number of DC's with PhDs. In fact, at the WFC conference, the session that had the greatest attendance was the showcase of Canadian Researchers, with the room jam packed and many forced to stand to hear the presentations. One of the attendees commented on how far we have come as a profession. He stated, he could remember such a time when a meeting of researchers would rarely be attended by more than 10–20 people, most of whom would have been the researchers themselves. We have come far indeed!

This could not have been accomplished without the vision of the CCRF (Canadian Chiropractic Research Foundation) and its desire to develop University-based Research Chairs. We have come a long way from the first chair at the University of Calgary, (Dr. Greg Kawchuk), to ten research chairs and professorships at universities

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across Canada, the latest coming in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In the past eleven years this foresight has fostered the opportunity for much more research to occur, and facilitated greater opportunity for more DC's to be trained in a PhD program. Who can predict what breakthrough will arise and the tremendous benefits that will happen? As the amount of research increases and the interweaving of our profession into the mainstream of healthcare occurs, the enhancement of our profession's credibility likewise grows. It is indeed an exciting time to be in practice.

In the past year, I have had the privilege of hearing Dr. Marion McGregor DC PhD present on the role research plays on market share. A very thought-provoking presentation, based on her paper, "*A System Dynamics Approach to Jurisdictional Conflict between a Major and a Minor Healthcare Profession*,"¹ demonstrated the link research plays on enhancing a profession's market share and cultural authority. Simply put, the more research a profession produces the more influence and the greater potential the profession has on increasing its market share and cultural authority. This attests to the urgent need of our profession to mature and take our place in the world of evidence-based health care delivery. Not only does research continue to hold the door open for us to mainstream health care delivery, but it gives us a place at the table to voice our views when public health care policy is discussed. The resulting enhancement of our credibility not only ensures our survival but also situates our profession to be viewed as the experts in the delivery of spinal health care.

We, as a profession are at a crossroads. In the past there have always been the financial resources to cover the cost of supporting our researchers. However, with the increased number of DC PhDs, these finite resources are stretched to the point where difficult choices will be required. Should new funding sources not be found, new research projects will have to be delayed or may not be funded. In the latest edition of the Canadian Chiropractic Research Bulletin, Dr. Vince Adams states "we currently have 15 DC, PhD's in fulltime active research and another 15 DC's being trained in a PhD program."² While this is tremendous news and will invariably advance our profession, the question arises; where will these new Chiropractic researchers find the funds to continue their research?

Current and prior funding has come from the philan-

thropy of the profession. The members of our profession need to be congratulated for their dedication to supporting research. In addition, the members of the CCRF, and the FRCQ (Fondation de recherche chiropratique du Québec) need to be recognized for their vision, resolve, and passion for promoting research in our profession. While we do have some very loyal partners who contribute to Chiropractic research we need to build upon this. Bridges need to be built to the private sector and others that value the care they receive from the profession. This must be done strategically and in a sustainable fashion. While fundraisers and increased awareness among our profession is commendable, a long-term strategy to address the pressing needs of funding must be developed.

Eventually, even deep wells go dry if used too many times. We cannot continually expect our members and the provincial and national organizations to shoulder the weight of funding research. A sustainable strategy that involves all stakeholders must be envisioned. One that will meet the needs of new and upcoming research and maintain the funding demands we are presently supporting. When the leadership of the profession meet, the CCA will initiate a discussion on the development of a coordinated strategy of sustainable funding for research. It is vital that all the stakeholders are on board and it is not just a solitary group that champions this, but a pan-Canadian approach, united and supported in its pursuit to advance the research of our profession.

If tomorrow is to indeed be ours, we must be preparing for that reality today. We all must ensure our profession is ready for the challenges that we will continue to face. We all must be active participants in the support of research in our profession. Whether that is through attending research presentations, keeping aware of what the latest advances are, or as simple as becoming a member of the CCRF or FRCQ. We can no longer afford to allow petty differences to derail our profession. We have the opportunity now to prepare for our tomorrow. Simply resting on our laurels and applauding ourselves for what we have done in the past is not enough. We are all part of the solution; if we look beyond our differences and focus on what unites us, delivering the best care to our patients.

Unfortunately, we are playing catch up. We need more DC's involved in active research. We are lacking in the number of DC's with PhD's and in the number of papers that are published in comparison with other healthcare

disciplines. However, this is changing, and we are seeing more and more determined DC's entering graduate studies. We need to support these new leaders of the profession and aid them in finding of resources to conduct their research. We must find a sustainable funding source for our research. By accomplishing this, it will be exciting to see where our profession will be in 5 or 10 years from now.

References

- 1 McGregor, M. A system dynamics approach to jurisdictional conflict between a major and minor healthcare profession. *Systems Research and Behavioural Science*. 2010; 27, 639–652.
- 2 Canadian Chiropractic Research Bulletin #19.

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Creating a culture of research