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**Keating JC. Introducing the Neurocalometer:
a view from the Fountain Head.
JCCA 1991; 35(3):165-178.**

To the Editor:

In your edition of the JCCA, 1991; 35(4):242-244, I read two letters. One written by Patrick G. Bickert, DC. The other was authored by Michael U. Kale, DC, FICA, FKCS. These letters were about an article written by Joseph C. Keating, Jr., PhD related to the Neurocalometer JCCA 1991; 35(3):165-178. I had also written a letter on Dr. Keating's paper.

I therefore take the liberty to show my deception and my great, great concern about the aforementioned letters.

We will soon have to cultivate and develop the moral, scientific and intellectual obligations to write about our past errors

with . . . OBJECTIVITY AND SCIENTIFIC ACCURACY AND INTEGRITY. SELF-ANALYSIS, and AUTO-CRITICISM are two symptoms of great mental hygiene and mental health and scientific vigour. HISTORICAL AND ETHICAL VALUES have to be respected because they are related to TRANSCENDENTAL PRINCIPLES.

Could a medical colleague of Doctor Elton Blanchard, MD criticize him, today, for having written . . . "Until the year of my birth the doctor was a spontaneous product. The choreboy read medicine in his preceptor's office, cleaned the stables and spittoons, went to the city presently and took a six weeks' 'course of lectures' - very ambitious ones took two 'courses' - then went home or somewhere and hung out his shingle. We have needed many doctors, and we have them - more doctors per thousand inhabitants than any other country." (sic)¹ No one physician would dare criticize this WRITTEN STATEMENT, this SCIENTIFIC FACT, this OBJECTIVE TRUTH, this HISTORICAL REALITY.

As chiropractors we will have to LEARN to appreciate with objectivity and maturity the qualities and shortcomings of individuals in our genesis and within our political elements. We have to separate the wheat from the chaff. Another obligatory step forward towards the academic top and UNIVERSAL ACADEMIC ACCEPTANCE. Let us end scientific tribalism.

J.O. Edgar Houle, BA, DC, FCCS(C)
Montreal, Quebec

Reference

- 1 Blanchard CE. Medical Dollars and Sense, 1912, Western Printing and Lithographing Co., Racine, WIS.: p. 20.

**Gatterman MJ. Standards of practice relative to
complications of and contraindications to
spinal manipulative therapy.
JCCA 1991; 35(4):232-236.**

To the Editor:

In a 1983 review of vertebral artery injuries caused by spinal manipulation, Guttman¹ estimated that there were "2 or 3 more-or-less serious incidents concerning the vertebrobasilar system . . . (per) 1 million manipulative treatments on the upper cervical spine" and concluded that there was no professional or legal obligation "to instruct the patient in advance about such an unlikely possibility". The stated risk rate was confirmed by Dvorak and Orelli in 1985,² and is the one generally accepted today. However, as I mentioned in my 1986 publication quoted by Dr. Gatterman, the area of informed consent has been subject

to considerable evolution since Guttman wrote in 1983. There have been changes in the areas of patient rights, informed consent and the law. Rate of evolution has been very different in different countries.

My main point in writing is to record my complete agreement with Dr. Gatterman that in Canada there is now an ethical and legal duty to warn patients of the risk of stroke prior to cervical adjustment. A written consent form should be obtained. I have expressed this opinion in addresses to many chiropractic and interdisciplinary audiences since 1988.

The sample consent form given by Dr. Gatterman is excellent in most respects. However, while it meets all ethical requirements it may not meet current Canadian legal requirements. To a lay person what is the meaning of "serious neurological damage" and why is the word "stroke" not specifically mentioned? If I was acting for a stroke victim plaintiff who said he/she would never have signed the form if "stroke" was mentioned as a risk, I think my client would have the sympathy of the court and I would have a winning case.

David A. Chapman-Smith, LLB (Hons)
Editor, The Chiropractic Report, Toronto

References

- 1 Guttman G. Injuries to the vertebral artery caused by manual therapy. *Manuelle Medizin* 1983; 21:2-14.
- 2 Dvorak J, Orelli F. How dangerous is manipulation to the cervical spine? *Manual Medicine* 1985; 2:1-4.

Gatterman MJ. Standards of practice relative to complications of and contraindications to spinal manipulative therapy. JCCA 1991; 35(4):232-236.

To the Editor in reply:

Mr. Chapman-Smith, L.L.B., raises an important legal point with regard to the Informed Consent form accompanying the article "Standards of Practice Relative to Complications of and Contraindications to Spinal Manipulative Therapy". To be legally defensible the form should specify stroke as a possible complication while emphasizing the extreme rarity of this being a likely outcome of cervical manipulation. It is important that patients not be unduly frightened away from a procedure that may offer considerable benefit, but legally and ethically, they have a right to be informed of the possible risks - however rare.

Meridel J. Gatterman, MA, DC
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