

Chiropractic Versus The AMA

For many years, chiropractors were labeled as quacks by the established medical community. Only in recent years have medical doctors started to work with chiropractors instead of having a confrontational relationship with them. The basic theory behind chiropractic is that subluxations are the cause of many, if not most, medical problems. Subluxations are defined as misalignments in the spine or other skeletal structures that may cause blocked and impaired nerve functions. The idea is that if a chiropractor realigns the spine then normal nerve pathways will be restored and good health will be the result for the patient. However, there is no scientific evidence that supports these theories and this is why medical doctors were opposed to chiropractic. All the studies made in support of chiropractic are basically testimonials from patients. The chiropractor aligns the patient's spine and the patient "says" he feels better. Whether or not the alignment is the direct and only cause of the patient's restored health has not been scientifically established. In the 1970s the American Medical Association (AMA), which is the main governing body for medical doctors in the USA, officially condemned and labeled chiropractic as a cult and quackery. The AMA actually had a section in its written Medical Code of Ethics that prevented medical doctors from associating with chiropractors in any way, shape or form. Also, the AMA's Committee on Quackery was working hard to discredit chiropractic by preventing coverage and recognition in all federal and state government agencies. The chiropractors, in return, sued the AMA claiming that the condemnation restricted free trade, and they won the lawsuit. Lawsuits between the AMA and chiropractors continued throughout the 1980s culminating in a Supreme Court decision in 1990 that supported an earlier decision that found the AMA guilty of illegally boycotting and conspiring against the chiropractic profession. The lawsuits didn't establish the scientific validity of chiropractic medicine but they did allow chiropractors to continue their practice without medical doctor interference. Despite improvements in the relation between medical doctors and chiropractors since then, chiropractors are still not a normal established part of the medical staffs at hospitals and medical clinics. Chiropractors usually work out of their own buildings and organizations separate from medical doctors' facilities. Occasionally a doctor will refer a patient to a chiropractor and vice versa but there is no clearly established working relationship between the two. Part of the problem is that the established medical profession has for many years been opposed to all other alternative forms of medicine, valid or not. Science was not the real legal issue. They actively tried to contain and eliminate competition, which is against the law. The AMA has enjoyed its monopoly of the health profession industry and has zealously tried to defend it against all other approaches whether it be acupuncture, homeopathy, chiropractic or any other form of health care that does not buy into the surgery and drugs culture of the established medical community. The biggest losers in all of this unfortunately have been the patients. If a spirit of cooperation and learning had been fostered between doctors and chiropractors instead of antagonism there would undoubtedly be a much stronger infrastructure today for providing health care to patients.

About the Author

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Source: <http://www.productsherbal.com>