

It's John's Opinion

# Who's Minding the Store?



by John H. Gantner, DC  
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Dr. John Gantner is a 40-year chiropractic practitioner, graduating from PCC in 1960. He has been very active in professional affairs during his long career. He is a past president of his local district (Rochester) of the NY State Chiropractic Association. He has served in the NY State Chiropractic Association House of Delegates for over 20 years. He is a past ACA State Delegate for Upstate NY and has served as President of the ACA Council of Delegates and as Vice President of ACA. He is a past member of the Board of Governors of ACA. Dr. Gantner is the only chiropractor in the State of NY ever to be appointed by the Governor (Cuomo) to a Temporary State Commission on Workers Compensation, (1991). He publishes the "NY Comp Letter," a quarterly newsletter regarding NY State Workers Compensation issues and conducts classes on Workers' Compensation procedures for NY State Chiropractors. He has published articles in *Dynamic Chiropractic*, the *Digest of Chiropractic of Economics* and the *ACA Journal of Chiropractic*.

Today's practicing DC is busier than ever with paperwork and demands for accountability. This arises in large measure from HMO's and other third party payors, along with a constant effort to overcome one sided paper reviews and IME's. Keeping up with these non-paying demands on one's time along with a busy schedule of patients is a daunting task.

Nobody talks about it but all this reporting we offer third parties, taken together, creates a "record" for our profession. Given our many chiropractic techniques and practice philosophies, it is clear to me that we often present our profession as a virtual Tower of Babel to carriers, employers and even the public. This confusion has enormous ramifications, not the least of which is the frustration it generates in claims reviewers. With few exceptions, we accept this and try to move on. But it still divides us as it confuses our professional image.

Is there an answer to this seemingly perpetual dilemma? Of course there is: strong professional organizations that are capable of establishing reasonable standards of practice. They do this by gathering, debating and developing important data regarding chiropractic practice and our market. The organization then feeds this back to the schools and licensing boards. This mandates action (read teaching and testing) on these issues in the most appropriate venue, chiropractic academia and its students. After all, isn't that the source of most of our schisms?

But a recent survey conducted by *Dynamic Chiropractic* revealed that only 27% of DC's supported their national associations while 43% supported their state organizations. At the same time, only 9% reported that they supported their schools.

Paint this any way you want, it clearly represents a stunning and deplorable lack of interest by practicing DC's in becoming involved in their professional organizations. The organizations get along, but they are hobbled by the poor support from the rank and file. Bottom line, little gets done. Good leaders exist but they are often outnumbered by others who simply fail to get their hands dirty. No matter how you defend it, a weak organization is a cry for a greater percentage of good leaders, greater vision and better management.

It is clear to me that in today's chiropractic profession too many DC's who are capable of becoming future leaders refuse to become involved in "politics" as they see it. They find it far more lucrative to pay attention to their practices — to use their abilities to make money and enjoy more freedom rather than to endure the demands of the rough and tumble of professional politics. One hears many "good" excuses: "I have to spend more time

with the family," "My practice is too busy," "I don't understand the issues enough," or "I refuse to work with so and so." Bottom line, more than a few doctors simply do not want to become that involved. They sit on the sidelines. Their motto is "let someone else do it." So who does it? Someone who is more willing to accept the challenge. This willing person may not be the most capable, but s/he is willing. And in many cases, that is enough to assure that s/he will be elected to high office (and make policy).

It is not uncommon to see non-productive, sometimes clearly conflicted chiropractors running unchallenged term after term for various association offices. This is as true in State as well as National organizations. The point we miss when we vote for these representatives is that we are not just electing an office holder — we are electing a manager! And isn't poor management of our organizations one of our greatest problems?

There is little demand for account-

ability from existing leaders. Committee chairs and association officers usually write reports, at least semi-annually. Members should see these to determine if these office holders actually have a mandate and if they are actually doing anything. Members should demand the freedom to read the report of every single committee chair and officer on a regular basis. If there is no report, that individual does not deserve the position s/he occupies. S/he needs to be replaced by someone who actually works.

One vital purpose of any organization is to create a climate in which new leaders can be developed. But in order to create such a climate, the organization needs leaders with vision, not those who simply covet power. Personally, I see little effort on the part of existing state and national organizations to bring young people "along" through committee work. In some chiropractic organizations, committees —

See **MINDING THE STORE** on page 5

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