

A Survey of Chiropractors Attitudes and Opinions Regarding Chiropractic College Curricular Content, Length, Relationship to Practice Success and Recommendations for Change

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this study was to survey chiropractors regarding their attitudes and opinions of the curriculum they were exposed to during their academic experience, to relate that experience to their success and happiness in practice and to solicit feedback for improvement in the chiropractic educational experience.

Methods: A 25 item, on-line survey was created to elicit feedback in 13 areas including demographics, career motivation, core values, coursework, hours, laws, satisfaction, boards, business and professional priorities.

Results: There were 218 respondents to the survey questionnaire. 18 chiropractic educational institutions were represented by the responses with 71% of the respondents having graduated from either Life University, Palmer or

Sherman. Responses indicated 204 respondents practice in 31 states, 5 in Canada, 6 overseas and 3 unknown. Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Georgia were the most represented states.

Conclusion: The results of this survey have implications for curriculum development within chiropractic. While political and academic leadership have their own opinions regarding the future of the profession, practitioners - including recent graduates, have contrary views regarding the importance and ranking of these priorities.

Key Words: *Chiropractic, Education, Curriculum, Accreditation, Vertebral Subluxation, Best Practices, Regulatory Boards*

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to survey chiropractors regarding their attitudes and opinions of the curriculum they were exposed to during their academic experience, to relate that experience to their success and happiness in practice and to solicit feedback for improvement in the chiropractic educational experience.

Methods: A 25 item, on-line survey was created to elicit feedback in 13 areas including: basic demographic data, what motivated them for a career in chiropractic, what core values they were exposed to in the curriculum, what coursework the practitioner felt to be valuable in practice, what coursework

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they feel should be added to the curriculum, whether the number of hours in the curriculum were sufficient or excessive, whether the law in their state is congruent with how they practice, if they are personally satisfied in practice, whether the curriculum was congruent with their personal understanding of chiropractic, whether the curriculum prepared them for national boards and for running a business and finally, their thoughts on priorities for the future of the profession. A link to the survey was distributed to personal e-mail contacts of the investigators involved in this study. Those contacts were also asked to forward the survey to their own contacts and encourage completion of the survey.

Results: There were 218 respondents to the survey questionnaire. 18 chiropractic educational institutions were represented by the responses with 71% of the respondents having graduated from either Life University, Palmer or Sherman. Responses indicated 204 respondents practice in 31 states, 5 in Canada, 6 overseas and 3 unknown. Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Georgia were the most represented states.

36% of respondents have been in practice 1-10 years, 28% for 11-20 years and 36% over 21 years. 81% of respondents were male and 19% were female.

Respondents described the following core values taught during their educational experience that are important to them in their practice today:

- Philosophy
- Technique
- Diagnosis/Patient Management
- Service /Ethics

Respondents reported the following specific classes in their college curriculum that they believe have been extremely important in their practice:

- Philosophy
- Adjusting/Technique
- Anatomy/Physiology
- Neuroanatomy/Physiology
- X-ray

Respondents reported the following specific classes in their college curriculum that they believe have had little or no value in their practice:

- Microbiology
- Biochemistry
- Chemistry
- Diagnosis
- Laboratory
- Business

Respondents suggested the following specific classes should be added to the curriculum:

- Business
- Technique
- Philosophy
- Speech – Communication

- Working with MD's
- Documentation
- Patient focus
- Nutrition
- Neurology
- Physiology
- Ethics
- Residency
- MRI
- Pharmacology

22.38% of respondents felt that the chiropractic curriculum had an excess number of hours in the curriculum, 68.59% stated the number of hours were sufficient and 9% felt the number of hours was insufficient. Criticism included: too much science and diagnosis and not enough about chiropractic, leaving them unbalanced and unprepared for practice.

When asked how satisfied they were in professional practice, respondents reported that the clinical aspects of practice, taking care of patients, adjusting and technique were all positive aspects of their practice. Negative aspects included business, money and insurance along with frustration at not being respected, too much training for too little pay and that they learned the important things for practice outside of school.

When asked to rank what the importance of the following to them and the leadership of the profession should be: 74% responded that chiropractic identity was most important. 12% chose Medicare, 21% chose national health insurance and 21% chose insurance coverage.

Conclusion: The results of this survey have implications for curriculum development within chiropractic. While political and academic leadership have their own opinions regarding the future of the profession, practitioners - including recent graduates, have contrary views regarding the importance and ranking of these priorities. Given the growing costs of chiropractic education and the competition for students from other health related programs, academic leaders should consider sustainability and the desires of their customers in regards to chiropractic curricular design and content.

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