

Just as houses are made of stones, so is science made of facts. But a pile of stones is not a house and a collection of facts is not necessarily science.

(Jules Henri Poincare, 1851-1912)

Without systematic evaluation and the ability to critically appraise information that one uses in practice, it is easy to fool oneself. The purpose of science is to provide tools that limit the likelihood of a doctor being misled. In the last quarter of the 20th Century, the emphasis in health care shifted from the purely experiential practice base to that of integrating experience and science. Clinical practice is seductive. The process of helping patients sculpt self-images can delude the practitioner into believing his/her role is the central feature of health delivery or maintenance, rather than the inherent recuperative power of the body.

The doctor's role is that of an advisor and teacher. Through listening and integrating information specific to the patient with knowledge, prior experience and, when necessary, personal intervention, he/she guides the patient to better health.

Thirty years ago, few chiropractors were cross-trained sufficiently to comprehend and implement the tools of science to critically appraise and interpret evidence in order to improve the quality of healthcare delivery. One who worked diligently to extend beyond training of the typical doctor of chiropractic for the age was Michael Haneline, the author of this work. Here he provides the basic knowledge for the doctor of the future to understand the confounders of practice. The gamut of misunderstanding includes

1. how patients honestly lie (termed acquiescence) as they inform their doctor on how much better they are from treatment...even when they aren't.
2. how placebo effects of all treatments confuse understanding the true benefits of care.
3. how placebo effects, unabashedly, are a treatment that can be used to facilitate care.
4. how research methodology and analysis can serve to drive clinical decision making for the betterment of patient care and outcomes.

The future of Chiropractic depends on the ability to articulate its effective role in guiding and managing patients. The toolbox provided in this work is essential to accurate interaction with patients, payers and policy makers responding to critics and working to keep the system honest for the future. These tools are as valuable as learning the next adjusting technique or examination procedure for casting the success of practice in defensible terms. Each of us now carries that charge.

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