



We Get Letters & E-Mail

Chiro-Spam: Reflecting Poorly on Our Profession

Dear Editor:

We are certain that everyone in the chiropractic profession is barraged by spam - useless and intrusive e-mail. Everyone with an e-mail address likely receives offers for cheap drugs, get-rich-quick schemes, sex-oriented advertisements, and other garbage. Weeding through these e-mails is a major annoyance and leaves one wondering who actually replies to them, since without responses those sending them would eventually stop.

There is another class of spam that we chiropractors receive: e-mail from practice-management companies, chiropractic equipment suppliers, chiropractic "philosophy" and motivational messages, and e-mail for other purportedly valuable services. Arguably for some doctors in practice, these solicitations may occasionally prove useful. But none of them are of value to either of us, and we suspect are not typically useful for doctors in practice.

For one of us, a chiropractor who teaches at the University of Bridgeport's College of Chiropractic and is not currently practicing [Dr. Perle], these e-mails are sheer annoyance. None offers anything useful to a chiropractic college professor and researcher. Unlike e-mails from book publishers or the statistics software companies, which may have some value, these e-mails focus on originating, keeping and managing patients through practice management, EMR software, or billing for services.

For the other of us, who teaches religious studies and is currently serving as an administrator at UB [Dr. Healey], chiro-spam falls into a completely different realm. However, these e-mails have no conceivable benefit for him, either. Why do they even come to him? It's worth asking why our profession tolerates this type of spamming, since they shed negative light on our work. Since these e-mails are sent to Bridgeport.edu e-mail addresses, without regard to fields of study, they raise questions about whether the university's academic mission is understood.

Though the College of Chiropractic has been at the University of Bridgeport for 19 years, the e-mail blasts show that many in the profession do not understand that UB is a comprehensive university and that the chiropractic college is one of its 12 academic units. There are approximately 200 chiropractic students at UB and 5,000 graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in nearly 90 certificate, degree, and non-degree programs. Yet chiropractic spammers collect e-mail addresses from the UB Web site and spam the university's psychologists, accountants, historians, engineers, sociologists, physicists, and others.

This goes beyond being annoying to sending the message to non-chiropractic colleagues that our practice is of the fly-by-night variety. It certainly doesn't present the chiropractic profession in a positive light. Though the university offers an MBA in accounting, for example, neither of us can recall receiving accounting-type spam, unless one includes proposals to accept multimillion-dollar advances from a bank in Nigeria for a small up-front fee. Ditto for most of the other professions represented at UB. Chiropractic spam leads the pack in being persistent, intrusive and useless.

In *Wilk v AMA*, the AMA's case revolved around showing some unethical methods of practice-building employed by the chiropractic profession. That, in essence, is what this sort of e-mail is, and that is the message being received by our colleagues at UB. How many non-DCs outside of UB receive this material? What is the cumulative damage to the chiropractic profession? We believe the damage is significant and that it contributes to an image of the chiropractor as tenuously professional.

We doubt that this missive will cause even one chiro-spammer to scrub its mailing list of non-DCs, or to send its e-mail only to DCs who have requested it, but we might convince one or more chiropractic professionals to play a role in advocating for the elimination of such spam. In working as chiropractic professionals, as doctors who treat patients and who educate a wider public about the value of chiropractic care, it's the right thing to do. If you think so, too, send *us* an e-mail at perle@bridgeport.edu.

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