

This past weekend I attended a conference in San Antonio. A year ago I was elected to represent the south eastern states as part of a team of researchers and health care practitioners to develop international guidelines for chiropractic care. Over the past year I have participated in a number of conference calls and internet meetings, but this was my first in-person meeting.

The reason that this project is considered so necessary is that the field of healthcare is as much of an art as it is a science. In fact, it is estimated that over 80% of the procedures provided by medical doctors and surgeons are not based on strong science. Across the health care spectrum there is a movement to systematically evaluate the scientific basis for medical and chiropractic procedures and determine what is supported by science and what is not.

The ultimate hope is to improve the patient outcomes and reduce cost. If ineffective procedures can be identified and eliminated, it will steer doctors toward more effective procedures. The problem with this process is that so many procedures have not been adequately studied.

Just because something is not studied, however, does not make it ineffective. Health care will always require more than just science. It will require not only researched procedures, but the experienced judgement of a well trained doctor in addition. It will also require doctors to work closely with their patients, because not all patients will respond the same way to any given procedure.

The ultimate outcome of this committee that I am working on is to provide a clinical compass for chiropractors that will help them to know what procedures work best for any given condition and when to use their clinical judgement when a procedure does not have enough research behind it. It will also help to guide chiropractors in knowing when a patient has unique issues that would complicate recovery and help them to effectively deal with those issues.