

A recent study conducted at Virginia Commonwealth University discovered that many doctors would benefit from theatrical training to learn how to be empathetic with their patients. It seems that many doctors don't know how to communicate and connect with their patients. In fact, some don't really care about patient welfare.

How can this be? Aren't people in the healing professions supposed to be the most caring? Why should it be necessary for some doctors to learn how to pretend to care? The reason has to do with career motivation.

I chose to be a chiropractor when I was helped with a spinal problem through chiropractic. At the time, I was in my early twenties and I had an intense interest in health and healing and studied anatomy and physiology on my own. I was impressed by how it could help people without drugs and soon decided it was the career for me. Once in college I found out that many of my classmates had similar stories. We were drawn to the profession as a result of personal healing experiences.

During my career, I have noticed that the motivation for attending chiropractic college has gradually changed. A higher percentage of chiropractic students have never even been to a chiropractor. They are drawn to the profession, not by a desire to help people, but because it can be a good career move.

The same phenomenon happened even earlier in the medical profession. Beginning around the 1950's and 60's a career as a medical doctor became a prestigious and lucrative venture. Health insurance was just beginning to become a popular employment incentive and more and more families were using insurance to pay for their health care. As a result, the utilization and cost of health care grew rapidly and has continued growing ever since. Throughout that period, more and more young adults chose to become medical doctors for status and financial reasons.

I do believe that the majority of medical and chiropractic doctors are in their respective fields to help people, but unfortunately it seems that some are not and must be trained to pretend to care.

In my practice, new patients receive a 2 to 3 visit treatment trial which allows us to measure how they will respond to care and it allows us an opportunity to get to know each other. A successful healing experience is dependent on not only the skill of the doctor, but also the connection that develops between the patient and the doctor. Our treatment trial allows us to evaluate this connection and determine if we are the right health care providers for our patients. I encourage all of the readers of this column to seek doctors with whom you can establish a good connection. Over the long run, you will receive better health care in return.

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