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The laboratory, outside and inside

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Narrative abstract: The town in which you practice is your outside laboratory. Your role as a Chiropractor is to accept people from that laboratory and figure out what has happened to them to upset their state of well-being.

Your clinic is your 'inside laboratory' and the ideal way to report your clinical activities in your laboratory (clinic) is by writing a Case Report.

This masthead supports the ASRF Case Report Project which is currently calling for submissions.

Indexing terms: Chiropractic; Case Reports; ASRF

Introduction

A great deal has already been published in this and other journals concerning the value of the clinical case report. (1, 2, 3, 4) In the following thought experiments, I may be somewhat guilty of stating the obvious. Hopefully, I have re-arranged the obvious in a way that reveals the non-obvious.

> *… amazing results happen in your clinic, your 'inside laboratory'. Write them up as a Case Report and share them to advance our profession'*

The Outside Laboratory

Imagine a laboratory where uncounted experiments are being conducted on human beings every day. These are experiments you would never perform because there is no ethical way to perform them. You would never place a patch of black ice on the sidewalk causing people to slip and fall. You would never deliberately cause anxiety or depression to make people miserable with distress. You would never deliberately infect people with a dangerous pathogen that leaves them with long-term problems.

But in this laboratory, the town where you practice, these terrible human experiments are being conducted all the time. Experiments conducted on human beings by forces of nature. Experiments conducted on human beings by other human beings, either with malice or by accident. Perhaps the most disturbing; experiments conducted on human beings by themselves. All sorts of mechanical, emotional, and chemical stressors are being introduced into human bodies in these experiments no scientist has planned.

Your practice is located in the midst of this laboratory.

The Inside Laboratory

Some of the involuntary subjects of these experiments show up at your practice. You didn't design any of these experiments. In fact, when the subject arrives, the experiment is already underway. Your first job is to figure out what experiment is being conducted, and what the results are so far. Your next job is to introduce a new variable, a chiropractic adjustment for example, and measure how the new variable is or is not helping the subject.

To put this another way, the scientific method begins with a hypothesis. You may develop very specific hypotheses as you proceed, but the general hypothesis is always the same in your practice, your inside laboratory.

You hypothesise that something is disturbing your subject's state of health. This disturbance may be observable as an illness, an injury, or perhaps something more subtle, a failure for this particular human to enjoy their full genetic potential. You further hypothesise that there is something within your expert skill set that can be done to reduce that disturbance.

Contributions from your inside laboratory

Some of the experimental subjects that happen into your '*inside laboratory*' will be unusual. They can be puzzling, but that makes them interesting. As scientist Edward O Wilson has written, '*Deep ignorance, when properly handled, is also superb opportunity*'. (5)

If you are able to describe the effect of your '*expert something*' on the subject's health disturbance, it can take the form of a published case report. This is the way you can share the educational experience of the superb opportunity of that unusual patient. The case report is a type of descriptive research.

If you have a desire to contribute to the advancement of health science by publishing an interesting case report, but are not sure how to go about it, there is plenty of help available from your alma mater, from colleagues who have already published, and from the ASRF Case Report Project (6) publicised through this journal. You may find that the very process of writing such a report increases the clarity with which you understand that patient and other patients like them. In this activity, you learn at least as much as you teach.

I look forward to reading your contributions.

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About the author

Dr. Charles Masarsky has been in the private practice of chiropractic with Dr. Marion Todres-Masarsky since 1983. Their office is located in Vienna, Virginia, U.S.A in the suburbs of Washington, DC. He also offers continuing education programs for chiropractic colleges and associations. For information about his practice or his C.E. programs, please e-mail viennachiropractic@verizon.net.

Dr Masarsky writes a frequent feature in the *Journal* called '*The Wide Angle Lens*' in which he takes a broader than usual perspective on one issue or another.

The previous Wide-Angle Lens paper about Sleep Apnea

Masarsky CS. Obstructive Sleep Apnea, Gender, and Tone [The wide-angle lens]. Asia-Pac Chiropr J. 2023;3.4. URL apcj.net/papers-issue-3-4/#MasarskySleepApnea.

For others, search 'Masarsky' at apcj.net

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