COMPLIANCE
Horror stories and expert tips to improve your bottom line
Our unique formulation of key ingredients includes hemp oil, omega-3 oil, TrueBroc® and broccoli to provide a 3-in-1 benefit for the whole body – supporting the endocannabinoid systems, healthy inflammatory response and endogenous antioxidant pathways.

Why use our Hemp Oil Complex™?

- Supports the endocannabinoid system*
- Supports the body’s natural inflammatory response function*
- Ingredients that provide antioxidant activity*
- Non-genetically engineered hemp
- Gluten-free
- Combination of natural omega-3 fatty acids, including DHA, DPA and EPA
- Calamari oil certified sustainable from the independent nonprofit group Friend of the Sea®

Available in Human and Canine Formulas

To learn more and order, visit standardprocess.com/hemp-oil-complex

*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.
Antioxidant Activity*
Healthy Inflammatory Response*
Endocannabinoid System Support*

Our unique formulation of key ingredients includes hemp oil, omega-3 oil, TrueBroc® and broccoli to provide a 3-in-1 benefit for the whole body – supporting the endocannabinoid systems, healthy inflammatory response and endogenous antioxidant pathways.

Hemp Oil Complex™
3-in-1 Benefit for Whole Body Support

To learn more and order, visit standardprocess.com/hemp-oil-complex

We focus on achieving wholistic health through nutrition. From our organic, regenerative farming practices to our Nutrition Innovation Center, we are committed to clinical science that advances health and changes lives.

*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

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Available in Human and Canine Formulas

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Together with your patients
Take the
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Challenge!!

The FORMULA 303® Challenge is about your relationship with your patients. They rely on you for healthy natural solutions.

To get started go to:
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All-Natural, effective relief for your patients!

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- Neck and Shoulder Pain

Help your patients FEEL BETTER FAST in THREE PROVEN WAYS

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110,000 miles
the number of miles the average person walks in a lifetime.
equivalent to 5 trips around the Earth.
every triumph, every adventure, every path.
needs unique support, provide them the best.
handmade, high-quality, the hallmark of excellence.

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COMPLIANCE AS SUCCESS STRATEGY

From our 2018 Chiropractic Economics Reader Survey, coding was near the top of chiropractors’ topics of interest and was No. 2 in topics you prefer to read about in our magazine. Billing and insurance were near the top in the business skills you’d like to learn while business advice was the No. 1 reason why you pick up our magazine.

As a business owner you owe it to yourself and your staff to make compliance a top priority. Improved documentation leads to reduced denials and higher collections. Compliance viewed as a burdensome task results in poor documentation, fines, or as you’ll see in the following articles, possibly the loss of your practice.

So compliance isn’t No. 1 on your mind — but perhaps it should be.

In the ever-changing digital world your compliance program needs to be more than a manual filed away somewhere. As our feature story outlines, hackers gaining access to your systems and data carries significant Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) penalties for violations of patient records privacy and security. Last year more than $25 million in fines were levied for HIPAA violations, a whopping 25 percent increase over the previous year.

An effective internal compliance program means periodically conducting your own internal audits, designating your own compliance officer, overseeing staff training, constantly reviewing your internal communications, and more as you’ll read throughout this issue. The rewards go beyond “being in compliance.”

Covering your bases

Also in this issue, we cover how to protect your practice and computer systems against the dreaded ransomware attack, and additional strategies to improve record-keeping, coding and general compliance.

Finding the balance between speed of service, proper documentation and billing is the key to increasing collections while avoiding audits, and in the following pages we provide the tools and tips from industry experts. It’s not compliance from a box-checking, crossing-the-t’s standpoint, but compliance to drive your growth.

To your practice’s success,

Richard Vach
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

LET ME KNOW WHAT’S ON YOUR MIND:
EDITORIAL@CHIROECO.COM

“According to the Office of the Inspector General, chiropractors remain among the worst documenters of their services among all health care providers with an error rate as high as 90-94 percent. This error rate has triggered a requirement for increased oversight of chiropractor’s claims whose documentation error rate is at 85 percent or higher.”

—Mark Sanna, DC
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF BREAKTHROUGH COACHING

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR
So I can give more to them

Expand your chiropractic patient base and increase your revenues. Highly effective CBD is changing today’s pain care. Known to ease symptoms of arthritis, anxiety and chronic pain, it is not mind-altering nor habit-forming. Available in professional and retail sizes, CBD is the perfect addition to your clinical practice.

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TRENDING STORIES

The 8 most common social media mistakes and how to avoid them
Social media is a very useful tool if you know what to do with it, but you must be careful and make sure you don’t make one of the more common social media mistakes. It can take some thoughtful planning and organization to get it right. Of course, it helps to be patient with yourself and realize that not all social media plans can be executed correctly the first time, either. Read more about some of the more common ways to mess up your social media, as well as how to fix the problem before it starts.
chiroeco/social-mistakes

4 potential side effects of hemp oil supplements
Hemp has been used for medicinal purposes since around 2300 BC according to Rowan Robinson, author of the Great Book of Hemp: The Complete Guide to the Environmental, Commercial, and Medicinal Uses of the World’s Most Extraordinary Plant. Additionally, some of the health conditions it has been used to help treat since that time include digestive disorders, neurological issues, insomnia, depression, migraines and inflammation. While this is good news, supplements made from hemp oil do come with some potential side effects.
chiroeco/metagenics

Laser and decompression, more than the sum of their parts
While the adjustment is still the profession’s bread and butter, laser and decompression therapy can elevate chiropractic care. Since the inception of chiropractic more than 100 years ago, the movers and shakers of the profession have always sought new and innovative techniques and methods of care to help their patients get better. In today’s health care market patients are getting savvier and are often seeking a doctor who is using new and exciting treatment alternatives to an adjustment.
chiroeco/laser-decompression

SOCIAL MARKETING

HIPAA Compliance Online
Social media, websites and your online presence play an ever-increasing role in chiropractic practices — and increase the risk of crossing the line on patient privacy and obligations under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

Be wary of using one-to-one social media services such as LinkedIn and Facebook Messenger when discussing patient health as these services are not secure and lack encryption. Keep photos of patients off social media unless you have their written permission, and ensure your entire staff is on the same page when it comes to compliance and social media.

TWEET US YOUR FAVORITE MARKETING CHANNEL.
Use the hashtag #CE65 for the chance to be featured on our Twitter @ChiroEcoMag

FACEBOOK QUESTION

What’s the marketing trend you’re most excited about?

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Try one of our eCourses and get up to speed with lessons on business and chiropractic sent straight to your inbox.
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We’ve interviewed some of the best minds in chiropractic. Listen on the go.
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Up Your Digital Marketing Game
Follow the Data: Market Smarter, Not Harder
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Dr. Rheagan

Who doesn’t like a good joke when it’s a Monday morning?

TheJointWillSprings

Feel like a Champion today!

Well Mama

This is your Monday reminder to take some time to show yourself love. Do something today for YOU that is good for your mind and body: Meditate, Eat more fruits and vegetables, Do yoga. Read a book. Get a massage. Go for a walk. Drink more water. Exercise. Get some sunshine. The relationship with yourself sets the tone for every other relationship you have. Be kind and nurture it!

WilliamsChiropracticCenter

From the earliest years of contact games, football players’ bodies are subject to structural stress that Doctors of Chiropractic are specially trained to care for. That’s a big reason why every single NFL organization employs a #SportsChiropractor as an essential part of their strength/conditioning and rehabilitation team!

Strategrow

Your ability to concentrate (on the right things), and get them done will be directly correlated with your results. Today’s takeaway: Focus

Footlevelers

Americans are at a higher risk of dying from an opioid overdose than a car crash. Conservative care and custom orthotics are an effective, drug-free, pain treatment combination!

Palmer College

A new group of Palmer College students received their white coats at a clinic induction ceremony at the main campus today. Help us congratulate them on this new & exciting chapter!

Westcenter

Chiropractic may include: Restful sleep, Improved posture, Increased mobility, Fewer headaches, Back and neck pain relief, Quicker recovery time, and MORE.

WilliamsChiropracticCenter

Ever wonder what your back muscles look like under the hood? A great body art illustration.

Footlevelers

Americans are at a higher risk of dying from an opioid overdose than a car crash. Conservative care and custom orthotics are an effective, drug-free, pain treatment combination!
Great Minds Think Alike

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ChiroFusion is the first and only chiropractic EHR vendor to offer integrated online scheduling with TrueSync technology™
Chiropractors advocate for increased coverage of non-drug pain management for seniors, military retirees

Chiropractors from across the nation gathered in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 17 to urge members of Congress to increase coverage of non-drug approaches to pain management to help combat the opioid crisis.

The Advocacy Day event was part of the American Chiropractic Association’s annual meeting, the 2019 National Chiropractic Leadership Conference. Nearly 800 chiropractic physicians, students and supporters traveled to the nation’s capital to hear speeches from political leaders, participate in advocacy training and visit with members of Congress to urge support for pro-chiropractic legislation that would benefit Medicare beneficiaries as well as expand access to chiropractic services for military retirees and members of the National Guard and Reserve.

“Today is our day. Our day to deliver our message and to represent our patients,” said ACA President N. Ray Tuck, Jr., DC, in his opening remarks. Attendees then heard from U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), chief sponsor of the Senate bill (S. 30) to extend chiropractic services to military retirees and members of the National Guard and Reserve.

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Compliance issues are ever-changing. In this issue, we provide the latest on avoiding compliance mistakes, protecting your practice, ongoing education, and more.

70,000
Approximate number of chiropractors in the U.S. required to pass a series of four national board exams to be state licensed.
Source: American Chiropractic Association

473
Total number of new code changes released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for fiscal year 2019.
Source: ICD10monitor

273
Senate Bill 273 was signed into law in West Virginia last year, requiring doctors to refer patients to alternative treatments before prescribing an opioid.
Source: wvlegislature.gov

80%
The percentage of OIG issues of coding and billing errors that stem from poor documentation.
Source: Kathy Mills Chang, certified medical compliance specialist and professional coder

$439 million
Amount paid from Medicare Part B for chiropractic services.
Source: Department of Health and Humans Services OIG report in 2016

By the Numbers: Compliance

Exams, the importance of standardized exams and the psychometrics of the scoring process. While participating in a structured focus group, student leaders gave feedback to the NBCE about their unique experiences with applications, exam administration and security, and score reporting. This information will be used to improve communications, websites, and the application and testing services provided to examinees.

Chief Leadership Architect with the Authentic Leadership Group and NBCE Treasurer John Nab, DC, presented the Saturday enrichment program, entitled “Lead Now.” He acknowledged that, “the toughest person to lead is always yourself.” With this principle in mind, Nab led the group in defining leadership, identifying key traits of leaders and outlining steps to develop their leadership styles. For more information about the presentation, visit johnmaxwellgroup.com/johnnab.

Leadership Forum attendees included:

Student American Black Chiropractic Association: Chohnice Daniels, national student rep., Logan College of Chiropractic

Student American Chiropractic Association: Kaelyn Mead, national communications committee chair, Logan College of Chiropractic

Student International Chiropractic Association: Raymond Kociolek, national student representative, Palmer College of Chiropractic

College Representatives: Michele Bahadoor, Life West Chiropractic College; Brian Davis, National University of Health Sciences; Jessica Geis, Parker University; Darcy Oglaza, University of Western States; Nicholas Westfall, Palmer West College of Chiropractic

2018 NBCE Scholarship Winners: Maithy Ta, Cleveland University; Hudson Taylor, Southern California University of Health Sciences

— National Board of Chiropractic Examiners, nbce.org

Read more: ChiroEco.com/nbceleadership

CHIROECO.COM

March 11, 2019 • chiropractic economics 15
Humans spend nearly one-third of their lives in slumber, yet sleep is still one of biology’s most enduring mysteries. Little is known about what genetic or molecular forces drive the need to sleep — until now.

In a study of more than 12,000 lines of fruit flies, researchers from the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania have found a single gene, called nemuri, that increases the need for sleep. These findings were published Jan. 31 in *Science*.

The nemuri protein fights germs with its inherent antimicrobial activity and it is secreted by cells in the brain to drive prolonged, deep sleep after an infection.

“While it’s a common notion that sleep and healing are tightly related, our study directly links sleep to the immune system and provides a potential explanation for how sleep increases during sickness,” said senior author Amita Sehgal, PhD, a professor of neuroscience and director of Penn’s chronobiology program.

Without the nemuri gene, flies were more easily aroused during daily sleep, and their acute need for an increase in sleep — induced by sleep deprivation or infection — was reduced. On the other hand, sleep deprivation, which increases the need for sleep, and to some extent infection, stimulated nemuri to be expressed in a small set of fly neurons nestled close to a known sleep-promoting structure in the brain. Overexpression of nemuri increased sleep in bacteria-infected flies and led to their increased survival compared to non-infected control flies.

In response to infection, nemuri appears to kill microbes, most likely in the peripheral parts of the fruit fly body, and increases sleep through its action in the brain. Several molecules like nemuri, which is an antimicrobial peptide (AMP), have multiple functions that help combat infection, but its sleep-promoting role may be just as important for host defense, the researchers suggest, given that increased sleep during sickness promotes survival in the flies.

What’s more, the authors note that cytokines such as interleukin-1 (IL-1), an immune cell molecule, are implicated in human sleep. IL-1 can function in the same pathway as AMPs, and it accumulates after prolonged wakefulness and appears to promote sleep. In mammals, cytokines can induce production of AMPs, but AMPS may also affect the expression of cytokines. Given this interwoven relationship, the researchers conclude that nemuri is a working link between immune function and sleep.

“The nemuri protein is a genuine driver of keeping sleep on track under conditions of high sleep need like when we’re sick,” said first author Hirofumi Toda, PhD, a postdoctoral fellow in Sehgal’s lab. “In the next phase of our work, we plan to investigate the mechanism by which nemuri drives sleep.”

Julie Williams and Michael Gulledge, both from Sehgal’s lab, are also co-authors on this paper. This work was funded by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the National Institutes of Health.

— Science Daily, sciencedaily.com

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- Reduced inflammation & swelling
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FACT: Integrated Healthcare Practices Collect More and Their Doctors Earn More*

FACT: You can provide better, more comprehensive care and everyone wins. How can you do this in a principled way?

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*MAY 2016 Chiropractic Economics Salary and Expense Survey

STAFF PICK NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENT

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Relax Already is our answer to the stress of everyday life. It helps us wind down after a long day or relieve stress in the middle of one. It’s a great natural alternative to OTC sleeping pills and we keep it around the office in case of a stress emergency.

Why you should choose this product
Relax Already is a nutritional supplement designed to help your patients relieve muscle spasm, stress, tension and busy-brain. The product combines six potent ingredients (valerian root, magnesium, passion flower, cramp bark, chamomile and lemon balm) that have been shown in research to help alleviate muscle spasm, anxiety and tension.

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A LACK OF COMPLIANCE... AND WORSE

Horror stories from the field and how to stay a step ahead of risk

BY KAITLIN MORRISON
TIME TO READ: 9-11 MIN.

THE TAKEAWAY
“"I didn’t know” is no defense when the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services comes calling with HIPAA violations. Here are some cautionary tales, their costs, and some tips from experts on self-auditing and instituting policies to cut error rates and risk.

Chiropractic care, like any health care field, involves a certain amount of risk. Ensuring that patients have access to the care they need often means managing these risks and using your business sense to help you avoid common compliance pitfalls.

With the number of pitfalls out there, it’s not uncommon for chiropractors to be minimally prepared for compliance challenges in their work. Unfortunately, being unprepared is not a valid excuse. Chiropractors who are unaware of, unfamiliar with or willingly ignorant about compliance aren’t doing themselves any favors.

Keeping clinics protected from outside threats, compliance can provide key guidance and best practices worth following. Without doing whatever you can to reduce risk, you may find hidden compliance problems sneaking up on your practice.

Every year a number of chiropractors find themselves in trouble in a risky practice environment fraught with possible dangers. Here are some of the scariest, most common and most significant errors that occur in chiropractic compliance at clinics throughout the U.S.
Hidden issues
On May 24, 2016, hackers secretly installed malware inside the billing software on the computers at Tillamook Chiropractic Clinic in Tillamook, Ore. For almost two and a half years this destructive software ran undetected on Tillamook’s computers — snatching patient data including names, contact information, demographic data, diagnosis information, financial data and other records. As the malware worked behind the scenes, patient information was compromised, resulting in more than 4,000 patient records stolen.

Malware is particularly malicious because it can hide in plain sight. Believing their patient data to be safe and secure, Tillamook staff kept their EHR systems upgraded and made sure all necessary software patches and updates were current. There was even a firewall and anti-malware system installed to prevent hacking.

All of this changed in late 2018 when the clinic conducted an internal audit of their computer security. During the audit it became abundantly clear that their current compliance activities had failed. Someone was stealing valuable patient information that could lead to identity theft and the destruction of their victims’ credit.

The clinic immediately took action. Patients were notified, the malware was removed, and computers were upgraded further to strengthen security. If it weren’t for that recent audit, it’s possible the theft would’ve stayed hidden. Since it’s not uncommon for hacking efforts to be sophisticated enough to evade detection, in some cases even technical support’s assistance doesn’t reveal the work of hackers.

Malware is just one potential compliance problem for chiropractic clinics. Sadly, many other threats are waiting in the background.

Record vulnerability and penalties
Vulnerable patient records aren’t just a chiropractic problem; they’re an issue that’s particularly at risk of attracting the attention of federal authorities. Unauthorized access may also present substantial problems in other areas.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) carries significant penalties for violations of patient records’ privacy and security. Unfortunately, protecting patient records successfully is an increasingly more difficult feat in the digital age.

For a single HIPAA violation the financial impact can total between $100 and $50,000, with fines reaching as high as $1.5 million for multiple occurrences. In 2018 alone, more than $25 million in fines were levied for HIPAA violations, a sharp increase over 2017’s $20 million. Let’s not forget, too, that these instances often coincide with hefty monetary settlements paid due to class action lawsuits and other legal actions taken on behalf of patients. Costs can be significantly higher than the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) fines for violations.

Beyond monetary costs, there’s also the reputation risk that occurs with HIPAA violations. Large errors sometimes end up becoming very public and can harm a clinic’s record indefinitely. Smaller mistakes aren’t insignificant, either.
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Lack of self-auditing and compliance

Protecting your practice starts with comprehensive assessments internally to determine how compliant your clinic is right now.

Ongoing audits provide you with a glimpse of the state of your organization’s compliance. Onsite compliance programs help doctors manage their in-house privacy, HIPAA and security practices as well as Office of Inspector General (OIG) processes.

“Major reasons chiropractors do not have compliance programs in their practices are that chiropractors are self-employed practicing in single-doctor practices, have limited resources and a lack of knowledge of how to set up a proper OIG and HIPAA compliance program,” said Diane M. Barton, DC, MCS-P, CIC, of Medical Compliance Specialists Ltd.

Medicare and insurance reimbursement cuts can have adverse impacts, too, by further reducing the resources practices have available for managing compliance. Often, Barton noted, doctors don’t know they’re not compliant until an external audit or significant breach occurs. Basically, something bad must happen before some clinics will do internal audits or even think about compliance issues. Since audits can highlight weaker areas within a clinical compliance program, they should become an expected part of providing patient care.

Unfortunately, many chiropractors fail to conduct their own audits. They don’t always see these regular checkups as the organizational priority they should be. Because reviewing your own compliance practices has the potential to save your organization a tremendous amount of money, time and heartache, audits are generally a very wise investment of time, indeed.

Costs of Noncompliance: HIPAA

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services takes HIPAA compliance very seriously. For violations there are four different tiers of penalties.

Not every incident is created equal; some violations are accidental and some are willful negligence or even deliberate fraud. Consequently, the more severe the violation, the higher the fine.

The total financial impact of noncompliance can be much greater after accounting for legal costs, fines for multiple violations, and reputation damage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIER</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>FINES (PER VIOLATION)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>Accident, lack of knowledge</td>
<td>$100 to $50,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Minor)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Mistake, but should’ve known</td>
<td>$1,000 to $50,000</td>
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<td>(Small)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Deliberate neglect, but fixed within 30 days</td>
<td>$10,000 to $50,000</td>
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<td>(Moderate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Deliberate neglect and no fix within reasonable timeframe</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Severe)</td>
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First Tier: Modest Violations

Very minor violations usually involve noncompliance that the practitioner didn’t know about and could not reasonably have prevented. Fine: $100-$50,000 per incident, as much as $1.5 million total.

Second Tier: Small

Small violations where the covered entity knew or should have reasonably known. No purposeful malice. Fine: $1,000-$50,000 per incident, as much as $1.5 million total.

Third Tier: Moderate

Moderate violations where deliberate neglect occurs. The problem was corrected within 30 days of discovering the problem. Fine: $10,000-$50,000; up to $1.5 million total for multiple violations.

Fourth Tier: Severe

This is a severe violation of HIPAA: deliberate neglect and a failure to resolve the problem. Fine: $50,000 per incident, up to $1.5 million.
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Eliminating the coding mistakes ultimately boils down to learning how to code correctly the first time around. And if you’re not coding correctly, you could be missing out on revenue your practice is otherwise entitled to.

Kathy Mills Chang, MCS-P, CCPC, CCCA, the founder of KMC University, says a lack of proper auditing is an industry-wide issue. “You could just Google examples, and there’s so many of them. There’s a ton of horror stories,” she says. “I tell chiropractors all the time that it’s important to do thorough audits.”

Although some chiropractors make billing and coding mistakes, these errors may go unnoticed until an audit or a disgruntled employee decides to turn the practice in. According to Chang, the most common whistleblower at a chiropractic office is a current or former team member who’s disgruntled and has an axe to grind with their employer. Audits can help you catch and manage potential errors before someone else does it for you.

Error rates galore
According to Mark Sanna, DC, president and CEO of Breakthrough Coaching, filing so much error-prone documentation is the main reason the OIG is now scrutinizing the billing and coding activity of chiropractors. Error rates up to 95 percent are leading the OIG to look more carefully at doctors around the country who have high error rates at their clinics.

For these chiropractors, pre-authorization processes are then required by Medicare before patients can receive treatment. Doctors who are required to submit more thorough documentation before adjusting their patients must submit their recommended treatment plans for approval.

“At its most recent meeting, the Chiropractic Summit, an organization composed of the leadership of 38 national and state organizations, bringing down chiropractic’s error rate was designated the profession’s highest priority,” Sanna says. “If chiropractors cannot correctly document the single service allowed under Medicare, it is unlikely that legislators will be inclined to increase the services allowed.”

Avoiding fraud charges
“The simple answer is, coding that doesn’t match documentation can be deemed fraudulent,” Chang says. “In 35 years serving this profession, however, I find that the majority of errors are not from DCs trying to game the system, but rather not taking the time to learn what a code means.”

Getting the right coding education, Chang believes, can make a tremendous difference for chiropractors. Eliminating the coding mistakes ultimately boils down to learning how to code correctly the first time around. And if you’re not coding correctly, you could be missing out on revenue your practice is otherwise entitled to.

Leaving money on the table
If you don’t code properly, you’re likely missing out on higher reimbursements. That’s a huge mistake for chiropractors who are trying to build their businesses and grow revenue. Similarly, it’s also possible to run into trouble offering free services or cut-rate care — not just because you miss out on payment. Keep in mind that liability issues are still there, even if you aren’t paid for offering care.

In many instances, reimbursement rates have fallen as it is for chiropractic treatments. Although you shouldn’t artificially inflate the value of your services, it’s important that you don’t underprice your work, either.

Ongoing education
“Most doctors of chiropractic only understand, in a small part, what is required of them from a regulatory perspective,” says Scott Munsterman, DC, FICC, CEO of Best Practices Academy. Since chiropractors are responsible for following the same rules and regulations as large medical practices and hospitals, it’s important to have a full compliance plan for and be prepared to implement the best practices their clinics need.

Chiropractors aren’t the only health care providers who need to be concerned about these issues. But they are solely responsible for the compliance of their practice. As you start developing your own compliance program, it’s essential to do your research and seek out the right expertise if needed. Diligent compliance procedures will save you money, time and needless heartache. It’s worth the investment.

KAITLIN MORRISON is an author and freelance writer based near Seattle, Wash. She specializes in writing about health care and technology. You can read more of her work at kaitlinmorrison.com.
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THE MESSAGE FLASHED ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN IN FRONT OF THE STARTLED DOCTOR. “We have your data and will release it once you send us $500 in Bitcoin.” After a frantic call to IT support and a second $500 Bitcoin deposit, the doctor learned that all of his practice data, including billing records, documentation and appointment schedules were gone, never to be returned.

THE TAKEAWAY
Your practice is not just vulnerable to ransomware — it is an active target. The personal information contained in your electronic records holds tremendous value on the black market. Educate your staff and prepare your digital defenses, otherwise an attack could see you reverting to paper, ink and telephones to coordinate care.

DON’T LET RANSOMWARE HOLD YOUR PRACTICE HOSTAGE

As you read this, malicious hackers are scanning the web for practices with lax computer security to steal valuable data

BY MARK SANNA, DC, ACRB LEVEL II, FICC

TIME TO READ: 6-8 MIN.
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A cybercriminal’s dream
Ransomware is a particularly malicious software hack that poses a serious threat to all health care organizations. Chiropractic practices are a particularly attractive target as they have the mother lode of data including patient financial information, addresses, social security numbers, health care information, and at times driver's license and credit card information. It is a cybercriminal’s dream and every doctor’s Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) security breach nightmare.

Your practice is not just vulnerable to ransomware — it is an active target. The personal information contained in your electronic records holds tremendous value on the black market. One reason it is so valuable is that it can be used to develop whole new identities through identity theft.

While hospitals and larger health care organizations typically have entire departments staffed with employees who police their privacy protection and ensure their software is up to date, this is not the case in most physicians’ offices. Doctors typically don’t get very involved in this part of their practice, and for this reason there often are very poor security systems set up. Their nephew or local IT provider is running their server without any knowledge of HIPAA security requirements. When they are hacked and data is breached, physicians’ offices are much less protected and prepared.

At significant cost
The loss of your data to ransomware means reverting to paper, ink and telephones to coordinate care. Without your digital appointment schedule, keeping track of current and missed appointments becomes a guessing game. Patients must be asked to update their insurance information and new examinations must be scheduled for all active patients. The cost to a practice in lost revenue and additional staff hours can be staggering. In the event of a breach of unencrypted patient information, reporting requirements can include patient notification, publication of the breach in local news sources and on your website, and informing the Department of Health and Human Services of the occurrence. The damage to your good reputation can be difficult to recover from, if not irreparable.

There are many tactics that can make a significant difference in the security of your data and how prepared you will be in the case of an attack. However, the most significant challenge for most chiropractors is will power. Many practices do not address information security simply because they view it as too big to handle. Taking a common-sense approach and putting in place the required systems is not that difficult. This is not the time to hope the problem will disappear or that the odds of your data being held hostage are too small.

The "internet of things" introduces another vulnerability to your data. It is now common for equipment such as x-ray machines, monitors and scanners to have operating systems that can be hacked, especially when connected through your Wi-Fi network. These devices can provide a portal to infiltrate your entire system. They are sitting ducks for ransomware.

Prepare your cyber defenses
Preparing for a cyber attack is similar to delivering patient care. The ideal approach blends a dose of prevention along with tools for an acute response. In most cases, this doesn’t have to be expensive and doesn’t require sophisticated software. Begin by working with your existing connections. Contact your EHR provider and other vendors and ask them questions. The security rule contained in HIPAA can also provide guidance.

The roadmap for security improvement starts with education. After all, ransomware usually requires someone to click on a malicious link in order to unleash the software onto your network. When your employees learn and understand the dangers, they can become your first line of defense. Teach your
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D.D. Palmer talked about primary subluxations from an injury or accident, and secondary subluxations caused by toxicity, nutritional deficiency and stress. Many of the patients we see today are afflicted by recurring or secondary subluxations. That means the adjustments won’t hold as well, and your patient won’t be out jogging or exercising.

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staff to stop risky online behavior, even when a link looks like it is from a familiar place, like a Facebook post or an important document. It is unrealistic to think that your staff is going to stop emailing or posting on social media. However, you must have a realistic policy. Every member of your practice team must be educated about the risks of ransomware, email and social media.

Technical preparation
Once the education piece has been accomplished, technical preparation is the next step. Information isolation is a key principle. If your sensitive information is housed on a server, it must be safeguarded behind a firewall between the server and the broader internet. Any electronic communication with patients should be through an encrypted portal or other forms of secure messaging and not through general email. Gmail and other similar email programs are not HIPAA secure.Installing anti-malware and anti-virus software on both computers and printers can also help.

If disaster strikes and you become a victim of ransomware, having backup files is the key to recovery. You may not pay the ransom, but you will likely still have to restore your data. Several companies offer real-time backup stored in a remote location. If you back up your data on external hard drives, regularly check the integrity of the data to ensure that it hasn’t been compromised. If your patient data is stored in the cloud, check with your service provider to determine if they have their own backup restoration options.

One of the most effective safeguards is also the simplest in all major operating systems like Windows and anti-virus add-on programs regularly supply security updates. Many practices forget to apply the updates. Be sure your security and antivirus software are up to date. If they are, even if you click on a piece of ransomware, the program is not going to open without permission.

When we all kept patient records on charts in file cabinets, we locked the cabinets and didn’t leave the doors open. Consider these procedures the new locking of your doors.

MARK SANNA, DC, ACRB Level II, FICC, is a member of the Chiropractic Summit and a board member of the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress. He is the president and CEO of Breakthrough Coaching and can be contacted at mybreakthrough.com or 800-723-8423.
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5 WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR REIMBURSEMENTS

Even if your systems are slightly outdated, here are five ways to improve policies, coding and record-keeping — and collection rates

BY MARTY KOTLAR, DC, CPCO, CBCS

TIME TO READ: 10-12 MIN.

IF YOUR PRACTICE IS SEEING MORE PATIENTS BUT COLLECTING LESS MONEY, OUTDATED RECORD-KEEPING, CODING AND COLLECTION SYSTEMS COULD BE TAKING A BITE OUT OF YOUR INCOME. Adding services and products over the years to an antiquated system can strain billing and documentation efforts.

Here are five ways to improve coding, compliance and reimbursement:

Stay abreast of coding changes

Most insurance carriers cover evaluation and management (E/M) codes (e.g., 99202, 99203, 99212, 99213). Medicare, unfortunately, does not cover E/M codes when performed by a chiropractor. Covered chiropractic manipulation treatment codes include 98940, 98941, 98942 and 98943. Modalities such as mechanical traction (97012), unattended electrical muscle stimulation (97014/G0283), ultrasound (97035) and therapeutic procedures such as therapeutic exercises (97110), manual therapy (97140) and therapeutic activities (97530) are often covered by many insurance companies and personal injury carriers.

Many insurance companies also cover x-rays when performed by chiropractors. Here are radiology CPT codes added two years ago that relate to chiropractic:

THE TAKEAWAY

Stay ahead of industry coding changes and establish solid financial policies for insurance, personal injury and cash patients to save headaches down the line. Improved documentation will result in better collection rates and an increased confidence in compliance.
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72081: radiological examination, spine, entire thoracic and lumbar, including skull, cervical and sacral spine (e.g., scoliosis evaluation), one view.

72082: same as above with 2-3 views;
72083: same as above with 4-5 views;
72084: same as above with a minimum of six views.

73501: radiological examination, hip, unilateral, with pelvis, one view.

73502: same as above with 2-3 views;
73503: same as above with minimum of four views.

73521: radiological examination, hips, bilateral, with pelvis, two views.

73522: same as above with 3-4 views;
73523: same as above with minimum five views.

73551: radiological examination, femur, 1 view.

73552: same as above, minimum two views.

Have your policies in place

Solid financial policies in place for insurance, personal injury and cash patients will save you headaches down the line. For insurance with reimbursement, call to verify coverage prior to submitting bills. Some insurance plans (in and out of network) have high deductibles, so even if chiropractic is covered, it may take 20-30 visits to get past the deductible. For patients with high deductibles, or if you’re out-of-network with a plan that only covers in-network providers, offer an affordable, quality cash plan, despite the fact that most patients who enter your office will have some sort of insurance that covers chiropractic.

If you’re a cash practice and non-par with all insurance plans, including Medicare, what do you give patients who want to get reimbursed by their insurance company? Have patients sign a form acknowledging that certain portions of their care may not be covered by insurance. Patients must understand and agree to pay for all services and products at the time the services or products are provided. Give patients ample opportunity to ask questions about their financial obligation, other treatment options and right to refuse care. Use standard CPT codes such as 99203, 98940, 97012, 97110 for medically necessary services and insurance billing; CPT codes are not needed if a cash patient needs a simple walk-out receipt. For wellness or maintenance examinations, consider using ICD-10 code Z00.00 (encounter for general adult examination without abnormal findings). For wellness or maintenance adjustments, consider using HCPCS code S8990 (manipulative therapy performed for maintenance rather than restoration). Do not use S8990 for Medicare claims.

Appropriate diagnosis codes

If clinically applicable and justified in your documentation, use longer-term diagnosis codes such as disc herniation, sciatica, cervical radiculopathy, ligament sprain, etc., as your primary codes followed by pain, stiffness, spasm. I also recommend the M99.01-M99.07 subluxation codes and using complicating factor diagnosis codes to paint the most compliant patient clinical picture. Examples include chronic fatigue syndrome (R53.82), diabetic neuropathy (E08.40), pins and needles (R20.2), anxiety or depression (F41.8), and dizziness (R42).

Denials and fighting back

Make sure you are clear on what constitutes “medical necessity.” According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, a medical necessity is a service, treatment, procedure, equipment or supply provided by a physician or other health care provider that is required to identify or treat a patient’s illness or injury. It is:

- consistent with the symptom(s) or diagnosis and treatment of the patient’s illness or injury;
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Make sure you are enrolled in Medicare and have an active Medicare provider number — otherwise, stop seeing Medicare patients. You are required to bill Medicare for spinal manipulation.

b. appropriate under the standards of acceptable practice to treat that illness or injury;

c. not solely for the convenience of the participant, physician or other health care provider; and

d. the most appropriate service, treatment, procedure, equipment or supply which can be safely provided to the patient and accomplishes the desired end result in the most economical manner.

If you’re getting denials based on the patient reaching maximal medical improvement, use appropriate “fight-back” or appeal letters. You should respond and appeal improper denials, especially on medical necessity.

Examples of good appeal letter phrasing include the following:

- The patient went from being in pain 80 percent of the day to only 30 percent within the first month of care.
- Pain levels went from 9/10 to 5/10 over a 30-day period.
- Bending and lifting abilities improved approximately 30 percent over the past six weeks of care.
- Lumbar flexion range of motion went from 40/90 with pain to 65/90 without pain.
- The patient needed pain medication due to the exacerbations of joint pain and discomfort. Part of the care provided in this office resulted in the patient reporting he/she now takes less medication.
- Use scores and grading scales to prove care was beneficial.
- Use orthopedic or neurological tests, pain questionnaires and outcome assessment tools.
- Include radiology results, MRI findings and any other diagnostic test results in the patient records to connect findings to the patient’s symptoms, or to the inability to perform certain normal daily activities. Example: “At the present time, due to the patient’s radiating pain, numbness and stiffness in his right leg, stemming from a herniated disc in his low back, he cannot play on the floor with his children, and cannot put on his socks and shoes without assistance.”

**Medicare tips**

For Medicare you are allowed, and should be able, to collect normal fees for exams, x-rays and therapies. Make sure you are enrolled in Medicare and have an active Medicare provider number — otherwise, stop seeing Medicare patients. You are required to bill Medicare for spinal manipulation. If you are not billing Medicare for spinal manipulation because you think you do not have to, then stop what you’re doing and contact your state association as soon as possible.

Proper use of Advance Beneficiary Notice of Noncoverage (ABN) is also very important. If you’re not enrolled in Medicare, you are not allowed to use the Medicare ABN form. You also do not have to accept assignment on secondary or supplemental plans (unless under contract).

Regarding maintenance therapy, chiropractic spinal manipulation is not payable by Medicare. According to Medicare, maintenance therapy includes services that seek to prevent disease, promote health and prolong and enhance the quality of life, or maintain or prevent deterioration of a chronic condition. When further clinical improvement cannot reasonably be expected from continuous ongoing care, and the chiropractic treatment becomes supportive, the treatment is then considered maintenance therapy.

**Individual documentation**

Create a chiropractic treatment plan on every patient, and make sure functional improvement is evident in chart notes. Also thoroughly document levels of subluxation adjustment, and perform regular re-exams to establish medical necessity and conversion to wellness or maintenance care. Have a HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices form filled out on every patient. For minors, have a consent to treat minor form on file.

To round out your documentation and ensure compliance, make sure you document specific levels of subluxations treated (with legible notes), progress toward goals, time spent in therapy and for each exercise, provide planned re-evaluations, obtain a valid signature that services were performed, and supply worksheets indicating the specific exercises done.

No matter the state of your current record-keeping, coding and collection systems, these tips will add to the quality of your documentation, and subsequently to your bottom line.

**MARTY KOTLAR**, DC, CPCO, CBCS, is the president of Target Coding. Over the last 12 years he has helped hundreds of chiropractors, acupuncturists, physical therapists and massage therapists with compliance as it relates to billing, coding, documentation, Medicare and HIPAA. Kotlar is certified in compliance, a certified coding specialist, a contributing author to coding and compliance journals, and a guest speaker at state association conventions. He can be reached at 800-270-7044, targetcoding.com or drkotlar@targetcoding.com.
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EVERY MODERN HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONER IS SURELY FAMILIAR WITH DAVID SACKETT’S 1996 DESCRIPTION OF EVIDENCE-BASED MEDICINE AS “THE CONSCIENTIOUS, EXPLICIT, AND JUDICIOUS USE OF CURRENT BEST EVIDENCE IN MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT THE CARE OF INDIVIDUAL PATIENTS. The practice of evidence-based medicine means integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research.”1 The intent of evidence-based practice (EBP) was to marry the best and most current quantitative scientific research evidence with the clinical experience of the practitioner, earned through clinical practice with patients, to create optimal decision-making for the treatment of a problem.

Evidence-based rigidity
Over the years, however, critics of EBP have argued that this approach turns clinicians into technicians who follow a recipe, with individual patient and...
practitioner values, as well as the circumstances of each patient, being lost in the mix. The majority of providers, left to their own devices, would probably not express this tendency. However, the adoption of evidence-based practice guidelines such as the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine or Official Disability Guidelines that dominate the third-party pay structure has certainly contributed to the idea that the research component of EBP is what really matters and the other factors are less important. One could make the argument that, over time, EBP became research-focused rather than patient-focused.

Any chiropractor who has been told they have six visits to make significant changes with a patient with low back pain or else their care is the wrong option, for example, understands the frustration that can come with EBP guidelines. It is easy to see how practitioners can have a negative outlook on the evidence when it is used to guide care (or the lack thereof) for patients who depend on third-party pay structures.

Also inherent to evidence-based practice is the type of research that is considered. Practice guidelines like the ACOEM or ODG mentioned previously, systematic reviews and meta-analyses get the highest ranking. However, as with any type of research these can have their own inherent biases and are not without problems, especially when being applied to a patient whose circumstances may not exactly match the research inquiry. In practice, EBP tends to put the highest value on these types of research, assessment and diagnosis, and factors like prevalence. Rarely, however, does a patient’s presentation exactly match the inquiries of EBP and the evidence, and so, how does a provider use all of the available research to better serve the patient at hand?

Evidence-informed, patient-centered
In more recent years the term “evidence-informed practice” (EIP) has found

One could make the argument that, over time, evidence-based practice became research-focused rather than patient-focused.

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its way into the lexicon of health care providers. While it may seem like mincing words, there is a significant difference between what has become evidence-based practice and this newer approach. Proponents of EIP suggest that the goal of collecting evidence to help inform a provider on a particular case should go further than the singular goal of reducing bias and that a wider range of research information should be used. Estabrooks advocated that providers add “some of our own conventional wisdom and common sense” and give higher value to qualitative studies, case reports, scientific principles and expert opinions. Miles and Loughlin have promoted the use of evidence-informed practice to mean the process is person-centered rather than research and evidence-focused and this is, perhaps, the most important distinction between evidence-informed and evidence-based practice styles.

To better illustrate the differences in evidence-based and evidence-informed practices, let us consider two therapies gaining popularity among manual therapists and chiropractors: cupping and compression “flossing.” Cupping gained wide popularity in the United States during the 2016 Olympics when U.S. swimmer Michael Phelps was seen with the now-familiar cupping marks on his shoulder and back. The media exploded with curiosity about cupping therapy. Of course, the endless debates about “if it works” or not came with it. Cupping has been used for more than 3,000 years throughout Asia, Greece, Egypt and the Saharan region, Iran, and throughout the Muslim world. A medical textbook published in Europe in 1694 shows an illustration of a man having cupping performed on his buttocks. Yet, a 2014 systematic review of cupping concluded that, “because of the unreasonable design and poor research quality, the clinical evidence of cupping is very low,” and a 2011 review found that, “the effectiveness of cupping is currently not well-documented for most conditions.”

An evidence-informed approach would combine anecdotal evidence, the potential underlying mechanisms, risk and reward analysis, and would balance these against EBP guidelines that suggest that an intervention for low back pain, for example, should yield significant objective changes within a trial of six visits.

Cupping and compression-band flossing
Cupping has been used for more than 3,000 years throughout Asia, Greece, Egypt and the Saharan region, Iran, and throughout the Muslim world. A medical textbook published in Europe in 1694 shows an illustration of a man having cupping performed on his buttocks. Yet, a 2014 systematic review of cupping concluded that, “because of the unreasonable design and poor research quality, the clinical evidence of cupping is very low,” and a 2011 review found that, “the effectiveness of cupping is currently not well-documented for most conditions.” Compression-band flossing, aka “voodoo flossing,” has quite a fuzzy
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*“The bitterness of poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten.”*
history; however, there is clear evidence of it being utilized in powerlifting gyms before gaining popularity in the CrossFit community through the book and videos of physical therapist Kelly Starrett. Today it is rare to not see it being practiced by laypeople in these settings.

A PubMed search performed by this author found only two peer-reviewed articles on flossing. The first had to do with ankle range of motion, jumping and sprinting performance, and the second was a follow-up to that study. Compression flossing is widely used, yet there is essentially no evidence for or against it in the literature.

Strict adherents to EBP would likely pass over both cupping and flossing as options for patients with neuromusculoskeletal problems. Flossing has no apparent high-quality research for or against it at all, and the systematic reviews of cupping are not favorable. Comparatively, the evidence-informed approach would look at more types of evidence. Cupping has been used in a variety of cultures for thousands of years and flossing, while much newer, is commonly used in athletic circles. An evidence-informed practitioner would take this anecdotal evidence and use into account.

Furthermore, an EIP approach takes into higher account the principles underlying these therapies. Both therapies engage the skin and underlying tissues like fascia and muscle. Cupping creates decompression of tissues while flossing creates compression. Providers can manipulate the cups or floss once they are placed, creating shear patterns in the tissues; and it is known that certain receptors (Ruffini endings) in tissues respond favorably to shear and compression and can create local and global tissue tone changes. Cupping and flossing create increased sensory input into the areas they are applied to. Given that acute and chronic pain has been shown to "smudge" the sensory cortex's representation of affected body parts and have a negative effect on tactile acuity, could adding stimulation to these areas via cups or floss have a beneficial effect for patients? Cupping and flossing both allow for the addition of active movement, creating different types of strain, shear and the potential for haptic feedback that allows patients to use cups as targets for movement patterns — or, when coupled with compression bands, to maintain body positions during movements in tasks that make them maintain a certain amount of tension in a band through a movement.

There is no evidence, for or against, the use of cupping or compression flossing when coupled with meaningful movement; however, there is certainly biological plausibility and foundational science that supports the potential of
these therapies. An evidence-informed approach would combine anecdotal evidence, the potential underlying mechanisms, risk and reward analysis, and would balance these against EBP guidelines that suggest that an intervention for low back pain, for example, should yield significant objective changes within a trial of six visits.

Such an approach does not throw the evidence that is available out the window, nor does it so rigidly adhere to a certain type of study that it stifles the potential for outcomes in an intervention with the patient. This type of approach is patient-focused and outcome-focused and has the best potential for putting the needs of the patient first before all else.

STEVE AGOCS, DC, is assistant dean of chiropractic education at Cleveland University-Kansas City as well as a course instructor on chiropractic history and technique. Agocs is a post-graduate educator sponsored by RockTape with an interest in movement, instrument assisted soft tissue manipulation, kinesiology taping, functional cupping, flossing and pain science. He can be contacted at steve agoecs@cleveland.edu.

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A FOOLPROOF WAY TO BUY OR SELL A PRACTICE

How to navigate a market that has become progressively challenging

BY GREGORY KINGSBURY, DC
TIME TO READ: 7-9 MIN.

THE TAKEAWAY
Whether you’re contemplating buying your first practice or selling your career investment, be aware of the pitfalls and strategies to achieve fair market value and ensure a smooth transaction.

SELLING OR BUYING A CHIROPRACTIC PRACTICE HAS GOTTEN PROGRESSIVELY MORE DIFFICULT OVER THE LAST 30-40 YEARS. Having personally owned multiple offices from the late 1970s through the mid-1990s gives me a unique perspective on the current marketplace for selling and buying.

Let’s address this issue from both the seller and buyer perspective:

Seller perspective
The most common reasons for selling can include retirement, failing health, burnout, career change, desire to move to a different location and marital dissolution. Regardless of the reason, the owner of a viable chiropractic practice wants to be able to sell at fair market value, which should be a substantial return on their career investment and all that represents.
Assuming the practice has been valued correctly by a knowledgeable and experienced practice broker, where will the most likely buyer come from?

Before addressing that question, let’s determine who in all probability will not be a candidate to buy a practice. The first unlikely candidate (although not 100 percent disqualified) is a recent graduate. This doctor will more than likely not have their own financial resources or access to them. It’s no secret that the majority of newly-minted chiropractors graduate with very high student debt levels, which automatically disqualifies them for practice acquisition financing either through traditional lending sources or even family members. Aside from the inability to secure financing, they will likely not have the necessary business, clinical or marketing skills to take over an established practice and be successful. Virtually all practice acquisition lenders will not even consider lending money to any chiropractor who has less than two years’ experience as either an associate, partner or sole proprietor.

The most likely buyers of a chiropractic practice are:

1. An associate or partner who is already working in your practice.

2. A contractor or associate DC who is working at another clinic in your state and is desirous of having their own practice with a built-in base of patients, referral sources and a guaranteed income from the get-go.

3. An established practitioner in the same catchment area you serve who wants a satellite location. This DC most likely has an associate or partner who will take over your practice.

4. An associate doctor or independent contractor already working in the established office of the seller. It is likely they will know the clinical and business side of the practice, most of the patients and referral sources. For this buyer, securing financing and making the transition after the sale will be much easier and smoother.

Don’t go it alone

More than 95 percent of practice sales will involve one of these buyer categories, and it behooves any doctor wanting to sell their practice to focus on this group and utilize the knowledge, skills and talents of an experienced sales agent or broker to help make this happen.

Although some practice owners will want to go the solo route and try to sell their practice without the assistance of an experienced broker, in most cases this can prove to be a daunting and problematic task. In real estate terms, this is called a FSBO (sounds like FISBO) and means “for sale by owner.” Of course, the motivation is to eliminate the brokerage fee, which can typically range anywhere from 6-10 percent. There are several problems with this by-owner approach:

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Although some practice owners will want to go the solo route and try to sell their practice without the assistance of an experienced broker, in most cases this can prove to be a daunting and problematic task.

1. Very few DCs can accurately value their practice. Most will just pick a number based on what they have heard is fair, usually a percentage of their gross revenues. Poor pricing can be a great deterrent to finding a qualified buyer. Lenders will not finance practices that are overpriced, as most self-appraised practices tend to be.

2. By being your own broker or salesperson, your attention and energy is taken away from all the various duties that keep your practice operating smoothly and successfully. Handling inquiries, many of which will be from “tire kickers,” or “curiosity seekers,” takes time and energy, and is stressful and draining. One very detrimental effect is that the practice numbers inevitably start to decline. Collections, income, daily visits and new patient volume all start to move downward. If the potential buyer and/or lender sees declining statistics, a red flag is raised, and a successful sale will not occur.

3. Rarely does an established DC have the knowledge of the sequence of events necessary to consummate a sale, nor do they know the information required by the buyer’s banker, lawyer, accountant or financial advisor. Again, this is where a qualified broker can act as an advocate and agent, streamlining the whole process and making sure all the information required is gathered in a timely and systematic way.

4. The primary need of a seller is to have a knowledgeable and savvy representative or broker to value, market, negotiate on their behalf, and act as a liaison to all parties involved in the sale or purchase process.

Buyer perspective
The likely pool of qualified buyers was previously stated, but being in one of these categories does not necessarily make the purchase of a practice an easy or smooth venture without complications and pitfalls.

For the associate already working for the established doctor contemplating selling, or the associate or contractor working in another clinic and desirous of going out on their own, certain factors are needed in order for the buy or sell transaction to be forthcoming:

1. They must have at least two years of clinical experience before a practice acquisition lender will consider financing the purchase.

2. They must be familiar with all aspects of how their target practice operates, including the techniques and treatment protocols of the established doctor.

3. They must understand all aspects of how insurance reimbursement works for each of the providers that pay for the seller’s services. Ideally, the buyer should also be credentialed with all of the same insurance providers.

4. A smooth transition should be guaranteed by the seller so that the existing patient base and all referral sources are transferred over in such a way that they all have full faith, confidence and belief in the new doctor.

Pulling it all together
As recommended for a seller, a serious buyer should also have a qualified representative or broker advise them and help pull the whole deal together. Everything from an objective valuation of the asking price, helping to secure financing, transition protocols, reviewing legal documents like the asset and purchase agreement and negotiating on the buyer’s behalf are all part of the needed services for any DC seeking to buy an established practice.

GREG KINGSBURY, DC, is the founder of ChiroEquity, a nationwide chiropractic practice brokerage and appraisal service company. With more than 30 years of experience, he has assisted hundreds of chiropractors in the sale and acquisition process. He can be reached at greg@chiroequity.com or 908-419-7510.
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SCOLIOSIS 101: SPINAL BIOMECHANICS FOR POSITIVE CORRECTIONS

Induce positive corrections by understanding the spine’s physical compensation mechanisms

BY DENNIS WOGGON, DC

TIME TO READ: 6-8 MIN.
SCOLIOSIS IS A THREE-DIMENSIONAL MANIFESTATION OF ABERRANT SPINAL BIOMECHANICS — axial (top), sagittal (side) and coronal (front). Surgery and bracing usually address the one-coronal dimension.

Adolescent idiopathic scoliosis, in my opinion, is caused by abnormal spinal biomechanics along with a neurological component, but here we will solely address spinal biomechanics.

Spinal strength and compensation
When we look at the spine from the front, it should be straight. When we look at the spine from the side, there should be good curves — the neck or cervical spine curves forward, which is a lordosis. The middle back or thoracic spine curves backward, which is a kyphosis. The low back also curves forward in lordosis. The sagittal curves of the spine give the spine strength and flexibility (or, C-squared plus 1 = resistance). The center mass of the skull at the sella turcica is anterior to the atlas. The sacrum is a kyphosis and relates to Ferguson’s angle. The spine then has five curves. Five squared + 1 = 26, so the spine is 26 times stronger if straight, or 13 times stronger with the fetal curve at birth (1 squared = 1 + equals 13).

When the spine loses the good curves, it compensates by putting in bad sideways curves (scoliosis). In order to correct the bad curves, the good curves must be reintroduced. Eighty-eight percent of patients with a Cobb angle above 30 degrees have a kyphotic neck compared to 2 percent in the general population.

One tough mother
This cervical kyphosis or loss of the cervical curve lengthens the spinal canal by 24 percent. The spinal canal is the “home” or environment to the spinal cord. The meninges are a strong sock-like covering that goes around the brain and the spinal cord. One part of the three-part meninges is called the dura mater. Dura mater means “tough mother” in Latin, and it consists of very strong diagonal fibers that act like a Chinese finger pull when stretched and may compress the spinal cord by 30–40 percent. This traction and compression cause an adverse mechanical tension on the delicate spinal cord.

In response, the spine will twist and turn to reduce this tension. In the thoracic spine, lateral flexion and rotation are a coupled motion. As the spine bends to the left, the spinouses of the vertebras will rotate to the right. Scoliosis spines have abnormal spinal biomechanics and instead of rotating toward the convex curve, they rotate into the concavity. The body...
There is a reciprocal influence of lever arms in the spine — as the cervical spine becomes straighter, the thoracic spine becomes straighter, and eventually the lumbar spine becomes straighter. As Isaac Newton said, “for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.”

**Anterior adjusting**

The anterior movement of the thoracic spine is known as lordotization, diminished kyphosis, hypokyphosis, anterior thoracic subluxation, anterior dorsal syndrome or Pottenger’s saucering. Scoliotic spines have this anterior movement of the thoracic vertebrae, and an increase in lordotization equals an increase in the Cobb angle.

Posterior to anterior thoracic adjusting is contraindicated in scoliosis patients, including adjusting the “high side of the rainbow.” By understanding the spinal biomechanics of scoliosis, it is possible to introduce positive corrections to the scoliosis patient.

DENNIS WOGGON, DC, graduated cum laude from Palmer College of Chiropractic in 1974 with a bachelor of science degree in biology. He began CLEAR Institute in 2000, which has become a nonprofit organization to teach the public and chiropractors how to help scoliosis with chiropractic. (CLEAR stands for Chiropractic Leadership, Education and Research.) The goal of CLEAR Institute is to implement an effective chiropractic system of scoliosis care to help people worldwide through research and spinal rehabilitation.
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WHAT YOU ARE WORST AT?

It may not make sense — until you determine which areas of your practice require less attention, and where you want to really excel

BY JAMES R. FEDICH, DC

READING TIME: 4-6 MIN.

THE TAKEAWAY

Don’t get mired in mediocrity. It’s difficult to be the best at something(s) if you don’t figure out what requires less attention. What do your patients want from you and your office?

READ ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY? I’m reading a good one right now called Uncommon Service by Frances Frei and Anne Morriss.

The book’s main point is that when it comes to customer service, you cannot be great at everything. In fact, to be the best in one category, you need to be the worst at another. A few examples they offer translate well to the chiropractic industry.

What do customers want you to be best at?

One case study was Commerce Bank. They were the first bank to open on weekends. Why did no one else think of that? But the problem is it costs millions to open all those branches all weekend long. So, how did they do it? They purposely offer the worst return rates on CDs and savings accounts. They make a point to literally have the worst rates in every town. That difference allows them to offer the customer service on the weekend that the customers asked for.

Another great example is Walmart. Think of your average Walmart. Is it the nicest store you ever shopped in? Do they have outstanding employees with great service? Definitely not. What do they have? The lowest prices. They save by having scuffed floors, crummy lighting, not-super-informed employees — but they have the best prices.

Hopefully these examples make you ask yourself about your own practice. What do your customers want you to be best at? On the flip side of that, what can you afford to be
worst at? Let’s think about it. If your customers want fast office visits, a quick in-and-out, can you be the greatest soft tissue, ART, Graston technique doc in the country? Probably not.

Or, if you want the best waiting room, a real Ritz-Carlton of a chiropractic clinic, five-star service to boot — can you then have the lowest cash fee in town and take Medicaid? Doubtful. What most of us do is we are mediocre at all these things. Not a five-star waiting room, but not a one-star either. Not the greatest technique chiropractor ever, but pretty good. Not the greatest equipment in the universe, but not the worst. What do we end up with: a mediocre practice, and a mediocre business.

What can you be worst at?

Let’s figure out what your customers and you want to be best at, and then what we can be worst at. If you want to have the best office environment with a Starbucks machine in the waiting room (which we have — definitely worth the investment), a beautiful office and friendly staff, can you also afford to give away free adjustments and charge $12 per visit and take HMO and Medicare? Again, doubtful.

So maybe you offer the greatest customer service and are the most expensive in town. That will work. Or maybe you’re the opposite and take all insurance, charge a low cash fee, and your waiting room may be a bit run-down and your staff mediocre, but you are affordable. That works also. Maybe you’re certified in every technique and the best technical chiropractor on the East Coast, which is great. But then you can’t also be the most convenient, taking walk-ins, last-minute emergencies. Maybe patients have to wait two weeks to get in, and you can only see 15 a day.

These are the decisions you must make based on your type of practice, what your patients want, and what you think the market wants. But to be the best at one thing, you may have to be the worst at another. Being mediocre at all things is a sure way to have a mediocre practice, a mediocre life, and never reach the success you deserve.

JAMES R. FEDICH, DC owns a large multidisciplinary practice in Northern New Jersey. He is also the author of Secrets of A Million Dollar Practice and host of the popular chiropractic podcast, Dr. J’s Path to Success. To find out more or to contact Dr. J, visit djamesfedich.com.
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Now in a convenient roller tube, this 2-oz. Hemp CBD Sports Recovery Salve contains 600 mg of pure hemp CBD as verified in professional lab test results. The natural pain-relieving salve base with added ingredients of cooling menthol and arnica help relieve sore and achy muscles after exercise or anytime.

susanscbd.com

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**ENERGY SUPPLEMENT**

Pure d-Ribose is an all-natural, five-carbon sugar that’s important for producing adenosine triphosphate (ATP), the primary source of energy for our cellular processes. Amp-up your body before your next workout by dissolving it in your favorite cold or hot drink. Ribose supports healthy energy levels, promotes muscle endurance and shortens recovery time following intense exercise. Each box contains 30 5-gram packets of pure d-ribose, convenient for traveling or on-the-go lifestyles.

847-255-1600 • carlsonlabs.com
**CHIROPRACTIC TABLE**

Built in America’s heartland with computer-designed steel construction, the Saturn Electric Flexion Table can help you treat any spinal condition through flexion distraction, diversified technique or your own special methods. Among its many features are variable flexion speeds, ankle extension with ankle elevation, removable guide handle, traction handlebars, whisper drive operation and more.

573-745-1086 • accuflextables.com

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**CBD OIL TINCTURE**

Current Naturals’ 750-milligram CBD Oil Tincture (25 mg per serving) is phytocannabinoid rich, full-spectrum CBD oil, and 100 percent THC-free. This product is fully integrated from farm to shelf for traceability and product consistency. The CBD oil is derived from hemp grown in Colorado under organic farming practices.*

800-739-1445 • currentnaturals.com

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**TENS, HEAT, LIGHT PAIN RELIEF**

Innergizer Therapy’s GH2000 delivers electric pulses, heat, LED and infrared heat to the body all in one compact device and dual pad. The controller has a large screen and user-friendly buttons. The unit is powered by a battery that is rechargeable with a simple USB connection.

239-206-2049 • innergizerplus.com

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**LIVE ANSWERING SERVICE**

PATLive is a 24/7/365 live answering service based under one roof in Tallahassee, Fla. In business since 1990, PATLive takes phone calls for thousands of businesses nationwide. Utilizing proprietary technology and top-notch agents, PATLive takes all types of calls for chiropractic practices including message taking, appointment scheduling, payment processing and more.

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FINANCE & INSURANCE

Chiropractic Economics is pleased to present the profession’s most comprehensive finance and insurance list.

The information below was obtained from questionnaires completed by the listed companies.

Companies highlighted in **RED** have an advertisement in this issue.

**FINANCE**

**Abrea Technologies Inc.**
973-353-6209
freemedicalclaims.com

**Advantage Claims Recovery Group Inc.**
800-423-2419
acrginc.com

**American Collegiate Financial Services**
800-304-1471
onestudentloan.com

**American Financial Advisors Inc.**
888-679-9979
afadvisors.com

**Americorp Financial Inc.**
800-233-1574
americorp.com

**Anovia Payments**
855-608-6793
anoviapayments.com

**Atlantic Commercial Credit**
800-669-8008
atlanticcommercial.com

**Bankers Healthcare Group Inc.**
800-990-8401
bng-inc.com

**Best Practices Academy**
877-788-2883
bestpracticesacademy.com

**Bill DME**
813-563-8500
billdme.com

**CareCredit**
800-300-3046
carecredit.com

**Cash Practice Inc.**
877-343-8950
cashpractice.com

**Chiro Capital**
860-709-1100
chirocapital.net

**ChiroHealthUSA**
888-719-9990
chirohealthusa.com

**ChiroSecure**
866-802-4476
chirosecure.com

**ChiroTouch**
844-397-0222
chirotouch.com

**Chirowealth Learning Systems**
866-392-8217
chirowealth.com

**Chirowealth Management**
704-276-7325
chirowealthmanagement.com

**ClearGage Inc.**
888-227-5932
cleargage.com

**Clinic Doctor**
866-999-5859
clinicdr.com

**Coastal Medical Receivables**
866-785-6700
cmr-fl.com

**Coffman Capital Inc.**
877-661-8069
coffmancapital.com

**Crown Credit**
800-517-7266
crown-credit.com

**Electronic Transfer Inc.**
800-757-5453
electronictransfer.com

**Funding Well Capital**
866-578-9355
fundingwellcapital.com

**Gold Star Medical Business Serv.**
866-942-5655
goldstarmedical.net

**Home Loan and Investment Bank**
800-223-1700
homeloanbank.com

**HPSC Inc.**
800-225-2488
hpsc.com

**Infinedi LLC**
800-88-8087
infinedi.net

**Integrated Practice Solutions Inc.**
703-738-6898
get-ips.com

**KMC University**
855-832-6562
kmcumiversity.com

**Life Benefits Inc.**
866-502-2777
life-benefits.com

**Medical Billing Professionalns**
877-762-7767
mbpros.com

**Medical Compliance Specialists**
708-922-3911
medicalcompliancespecialists.com

**Murphy Business & Financial Serv.**
877-988-0911
murphybusiness.com

**NCMIC Finance Corporation**
800-396-7157
ncmic.com/finance

**North American Bancard**
877-274-7933
nabancard.com

**Path to Success with Dr. J.**
908-813-8200
drjamesfedich.com

**Physicians Specialty Services**
800-706-5722
physiciansspecialtyservices.com

**Physicians’ Financial Corporation**
352-377-0795

**Premiere Billing Management**
888-533-7583
premier-billing.com

**Promed Financial**
888-277-6633
promed-financial.com

**Red Rock Diagnostics**
877-362-6077
redrockdiagnostics.com

**Sharpe Leasing**
800-886-4920
sharpelease.com
Square
844-778-2734
squareup.com

The Business Backer
513-746-2020
businessbacker.com

The HELP Card
877-834-0550
helpcard.com

The Joint Chiropractic
888-644-6684
thejointfranchise.com

Wealth Factory
800-400-8385
wealthfactory.com

Westside-Medical
360-582-7190
westsidebilling.com

zHealth EHR
415-215-9743
zhealthehr.com

ZirMed.com
888-576-0800
zirmed.com

Zyantus
888-576-0800
zyantus.com

INSURANCE

Advantage Insurance Group
386-615-3353
advantageinsgroup.com

Arthur J. Gallagher & Co.
800-952-5557
ajg.com/chiropractors

Chiropractic Benefit Services
866-851-4636
cbsmallpractice.com

ChiroSecure
866-802-4476
chirosecure.com

Massage Magazine Insurance Plus
833-518-7520
massagemagins.com

National Chiropractic Council
800-622-6869
chiropracticcouncil.com

NCMIC Insurance Company
800-769-2000
ncmic.com

OUM Chiropractor Program
800-423-1504
oumchiropractor.com

For the complete listing of services these companies provide, and to view our complete online directory, visit chiroeco.com/buyers-guide.

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May 2 - 5, 2019

HIGHLIGHTING

Reshaping the Culture of Healthcare with Chiropractic

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<td>Atlantic City, NJ</td>
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<td>El Dorado Hills, CA</td>
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<td>March 15-16</td>
<td>CEAS I ERGONOMICS ASSESSMENT CERTIFICATION WORKSHOP</td>
<td>San Jose, CA</td>
<td>The Back School of Atlanta</td>
<td>800-783-7536</td>
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<td>ACTIVATOR METHODS INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR</td>
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<td>BIOMECHANICS, IMAGING AND CARING FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETE</td>
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<td>NEW CHARRETTES EXTREMITIES: A 21ST CENTURY APPROACH</td>
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<td>March 21-24</td>
<td>NORTHEAST REGIONAL CONVENTION &amp; EXPO</td>
<td>St. Augustine, FL</td>
<td>Florida Chiropractic Association</td>
<td>407-654-3225</td>
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<td>March 23</td>
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<td>Columbus, OH</td>
<td>Activator Methods International LTD</td>
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<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>Science Based Nutrition</td>
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<td>March 30-31</td>
<td>CERTIFIED LASER PRACTITION</td>
<td>Chesterfield, MO</td>
<td>Logan University</td>
<td>800-842-3234</td>
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### APRIL

**APRIL 3-5**  
**Ergonomics: Practical Applications Certification Practicum**  
St. Augustine, FL  
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800-783-7536

**APRIL 4**  
**Common Knee Conditions Seen in Your Patients**  
Webinar  
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**APRIL 6**  
**Activator Methods International Seminar**  
Denver  
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**APRIL 6-7**  
**The 3 Power Patterns of Health and Healing w/Dr. Brian Jensen**  
San Jose, CA  
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**APRIL 6-7**  
**Management of the Functional Patient w/Dr. Mario Fucinari**  
Newark, NJ  
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**APRIL 6-7**  
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**APRIL 6-7**  
**FMT Basic & Performance**  
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**APRIL 6-7**  
**FMT Blades & Blades Advanced**  
Germantown, MD  
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**April 12-13**  
**CEAS I Ergonomics Assessment Certification Workshop**  
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**April 26-27**  
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- WEBSITE: www.chirowealth.com

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