

# The State Of Nutrition In Chiropractic

## From **Dirty Word** to **Mainstream** Chiropractic Service

by Vicki Nuber



*Editor's Note: Our monthly review article, such as this one on nutrition, is an attempt to provide our readers with useful and engaging information on "the state of" a particular topic. For each review we talk to various chiropractors as well as some of our advertisers to attempt to fully understand the topic so we can share it with you. This is not an attempt at a research study or academic paper.*

It wasn't that long ago that "nutrition" was considered a dirty word in many chiropractic circles. As late as 1990 the nutrition taught in some chiropractic colleges appeared to be a placeholder for accrediting bodies and more suited for medical concerns. Some chiropractic philosophers decried any chiropractor that offered nutrition.

From our discussions with chiropractors as well as advertisers, it appears that the nutritional element in chiropractic is doing very nicely. We hear that more and more chiropractors are routinely incorporating nutrition into their practices. Supplement companies have shared with us growth rates of 10-30%, both in sales as well as the number of chiropractors using their products.

What has happened to create or allow this change?

### 1. State of health

As the state of the nation's health deteriorates and the traditional medical model frustrates even its most loyal users, consumers seek solutions. Those that are already loyal chiropractic patients utilize their patient-doctor relationships to ask their doctors how to address weight, digestive, blood-sugar and other problems, and many chiropractors are now better prepared than ever to offer nutritional solutions.

### 2. Good citizenship by nutritional companies

To be blunt, many chiropractic nutrition companies have become

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extremely good members of the chiropractic community. They advertise. They support the colleges. They provide speakers. They offer free seminars. In some cases they have become the "go to" companies when the profession needs help.

This has been noticed and appreciated. These relationships that sometimes begin on a sponsor level deepen. I can't imagine the major exhibits, seminars, conventions, and

trade shows surviving without the benefit of chiropractic nutrition companies. That commitment to and support of the profession has clearly made an impact in how chiropractors view nutrition in their practices.

### 3. Need for added income

We've yet to meet a chiropractor that doesn't see the need or benefit from supplemental income. We've personally talked to chiropractors who without much effort see \$500 to \$1,000 per month of nutritional income. We've heard of those that earn \$10,000 and even more of supplemental income from the sales of nutritional supplements. And we've been told there are quite a few mak-

ing hundreds of thousands of dollars by way of supplements.

### 4. Results speak for themselves

The doctors we've talked to speak of personal experiences that supplementation has given them. Whether it is a personal experience, a family member who benefits, or staff that constantly praise the nutrition help their chiropractor has provided, the results are clear to see. And when people see results, they tell others.

## 5. Greater level of education and understanding

As nutrition in the practice of chiropractic matures, it seems chiropractors gain confidence. As one doctor told me, “after seeing the results that a certain supplement provides, it becomes much easier to recommend it to others.”

## 6. Healthier chiropractors

One college educator mentioned to me that he thinks many students entering the chiropractic profession are doing so because of its reputation as a leader in natural lifestyle. He thinks they are more active, more conscious of what they eat and more likely to include nutrition in their practice when they graduate.

## 7. Technology that helps

There appears to be a lot of technology options that make chiropractors more confident in which supplements to recommend. As chiropractors gain confidence in the Internet, and as these technologies become cloud-based and therefore more affordable, there seems to be an increase in their application and utilization. (See article elsewhere in this issue.)

One chiropractor also mentioned the ability to use local testing services such as blood work. Instead of shipping tests across the country he mentioned that now he utilizes the service’s local courier that picks up and drops off on a daily basis.

And we can’t forget the chiropractic software companies that remind us that they now have systems that can inventory, track, put patients on auto-order, and even use email and text reminders for nutritional supplements, as part of their chiropractic care.

## 8. Understanding of marketing

Last, but not least, is the growth in chiropractic marketing. One marketing consultant told me that nutrition is a great way to expand the utilization of chiropractic. Many consumers are looking for solutions to weight loss, digestive problems,

and so many other health issues that are not being solved by traditional methods.

The chiropractic message of a “more natural” approach to health makes sense. So nutrition is a great way to grow or expand a practice. Whether you simply keep those patients as nutritional patients or incorporate chiropractic into their care, it is clearly filling a consumer need.

### How are chiropractors practicing nutrition?

We don’t claim to have all the answers but based on the many discussions we’ve had with doctors regarding nutrition, here are thoughts on how chiropractors are utilizing nutrition.

#### • Still resisting

Some chiropractors appear to resist the lure of adding nutrition to their practice. A few of these are simply philosophically opposed. Others may be closed to anything new. And some simply admit that they are stuck in their ways, and while not opposed to nutrition, simply don’t want to go through the hassle of offering it in their practice. Every-

body we talked to admitted that this group is dwindling quite rapidly.

#### • Simple retailing

Another group of doctors offers nutrition on a simple retail basis. That is, they stock and display products, and when patients ask, they have something to sell. These doctors tend to focus on multi-vitamins, fish oil, and other supplements that the population as a whole is either taking or should be taking.

#### • Once in a while

This group is comprised of doctors that see themselves as focused on chiropractic care, but interested enough that when a patient asks about supplements they are able to offer some simple recommendations.

#### • Chiropractic based nutrition

These doctors also see themselves as chiropractor-first, but they are much more active in looking at other health problems that patients are suffering from. They use strong personal communications skills to dig a little deeper into these problems in order to better understand the patient. These doctors appear

## Weight Loss

We separated this component of chiropractic nutrition because we felt that in some ways it is being used incorrectly. Weight loss is a wonderful way to reach new audiences, to meet new people, and to gain added income.

Weight loss as part of a strategic chiropractic nutrition health program makes a lot of sense.

However, we’ve started to see weight loss programs that are weight loss programs unto themselves. And chiropractors that implement those programs find themselves in disarray later when the fad has passed, in that they may have lost their status as a “doctor.”

If you’re going to use weight loss as a way to grow your practice, your income, and seek new chiropractic patients, move ahead. But consider making sure you have a strategy to include chiropractic care and explain to those people how weight loss and chiropractic work together to their benefit.





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to require a much deeper understanding of nutrition and physiology in order to apply this more active approach.

• **Nutrition based chiropractic**

These doctors have turned a corner and may see themselves as nutritional chiropractors as opposed to chiropractic nutritionists. They use techniques or testing systems that support leading with nutrition. Some still utilize chiropractic as a secondary, support treatment, but many do not even adjust anymore.

A marketing consultant we talked with suggested that these descriptions are actually a great way for chiropractors to introduce nutrition into their practice. He noted that it is best to start out small (retailing),

and as patients become more comfortable with the concept, they can begin little by little to integrate nutrition at a deeper level in their practice.

**The next great thing: function**

Functional medicine has been receiving a lot of attention lately in chiropractic, and its relation to nutrition is drawing more and more chiropractors. We don't know whether functional medicine as such will become an integral part of chiropractic, we've seen too many concepts come and go to make that judgment at this time. However, there are a couple of realities for you to consider.

In many ways functional medicine is working because it speaks the lan-

guage of the consumer — symptoms. Successful marketers we've consulted with believe that chiropractic limits itself by speaking an internal language. That is, using vocabulary and words that mean something only internally. Functional medicine speaks to the pain that consumers are seeking relief from.

Secondly, function may be the new frontier because federal authorities appear to be squelching attempts to offer "cures" or even protocols that lead to cures when it comes to nutrition. So, many chiropractors and nutritional companies are now focusing more on systems of the body and the function they provide as part of their marketing and educational efforts. Coinciding, some say, with the rush towards "functional" clinical and marketing programs.

We should not forget however that function is nothing new. We know quite a few chiropractors that have always practiced based on the model of function over structure. So while function programs may appear to be new, to some chiropractors it is simply a "some things never change" situation.

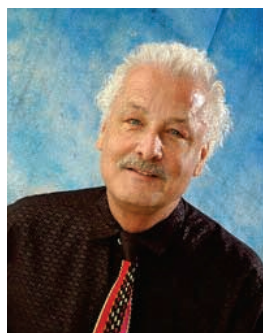
**In conclusion: A logical, natural part of natural health care**

From a patient's point of view, nutrition seems to be a logical component of the chiropractic lifestyle, but patients and consumers need to be educated in a logical sequential way.

If you've been a chiropractor for many years, you go to a seminar, and come back as a nutritional expert, your patients will see through and usually reject that premise. But if you tell a great story, brand yourself properly, and introduce nutrition little by little, nutrition can be an incredible growth opportunity for chiropractors and the profession.



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*About The Author — Vicki Nuber is the editor-in-chief of DC Products Review.*



## Here are some comments from various nutritional supplement suppliers regarding nutrition in chiropractic.

### 1. Do you see, or continue to see, increasing acceptance on the part of chiropractors in terms of incorporating nutrition and supplements in their practice?

A body without the necessary nutrients is not able to hold adjustments or repair damaged muscles and ligaments properly. A nutrient rich body that suffers a torque or subluxation requires the help of the chiropractor to mechanically align and open the neural pathways. Chiropractic is an excellent modality to combine adjustments and nutrition for whole person wellness. — Dr. Jack Tips, Systemic Formulas

Dr. Dick Versendaal was the genius behind the VerVita nutritional formulas as they focus on how the body functions as a whole with systems and backup systems. An increasing number of chiropractors choose to work with these products because of Dr. Versendaal's philosophy where they carry minimum inventory and achieve maximum effectiveness by getting to the heart of the issue. — Dawn Hoezee, VerVita Products

There have been major changes with patients mindsets due to the digital age. Most consumers and patients google questions and are use to getting answers to read on their own. OHS has created special health reports that take the latest health and nutrition research and condense it down to easy to read articles so that patient will decide to purchase products on their own. — Doug Grant, Optimal Health

Today's chiropractic physician is working hard with every patient to provide them with a means to reach optimal health, which includes quality adjustments, as well as nutritional recommendations. — Timothy Terry, Kirkman Group

Yes, because it provides both an additional source of income and has physical benefits for clients. They do well by doing good. And it gives the chiropractors new tools with which they can help their patients. — Dr. Keith Moeller, American Biotech Labs

Yes. There is a great demand and a recognition that the demand must be met. — Lisa Norris, Nutri-West

### 2. Can you offer examples of how you teach or support the incorporation of nutrition and supplements within the chiropractic practice?

We support it by doing millions of dollars in research to answer questions that nobody could ever answer before. To give chiropractors all the information they need to answer any relevant questions that clients may have. And we regularly attend chiropractic trade shows to help educate the chiropractors on the benefits of our products and technology. — Dr. Keith Moeller, American Biotech Labs

Optimal Health Systems offers products to the chiropractor that have been and are used daily with professional athletes in support of spine, muscle and joints. Products like our Acute and Fruit and Veggie plus formulas have double blind research studies and government approvals that prove they can dramatically reduce systemic body inflammation. OHS supports chiropractic by bringing products to the chiropractic office that has true research, endorsements and 15 years of proven results. — Doug Grant, Optimal Health

21st Century nutritional supplementation is all about cellular healing. When the cells are unable to heal metabolic disruptions, such as impaired methylation pathways, free radical damage, lack of ATP energy, damage to DNA structures, inability to effect proper epigenetic transcriptions, and loss of membrane integrity, the core healing processes can't take place. — Dr. Jack Tips, Systemic Formulas

One of the educational tools that we offer is a BEGINNER'S GUIDE (To Biomedical And Dietary Interventions) for practitioners to provide to their patients who are trying to understand the complex world of nutrition. This guide answers many of the questions that they have. — Timothy Terry, Kirkman Group

The CRA Wellness Association is rolling out educational opportunities this summer to continue the work and legacy of Dr. Dick Versendaal. It will include training on how to use VerVita Products as well as learning the technique, Contact Reflex Analysis. — Dawn Hoezee, VerVita Products

Nutri-West offers a variety of seminars to educate the chiropractor on nutrition and supplements. The current 6 module functional medicine series in CO is co-sponsored by the CO Chiropractic Association, and accredited by Logan Chiropractic College. — Lisa Norris, Nutri-West

### 3. What do you suggest as to the best course of action in terms of

### a chiropractor becoming a nutrition expert?

Just like chiropractic expertise, nutritional expertise requires education and practice. And like chiropractic, nutrition is dependent upon the body's innate vitality to apply the nutrients properly. That said, it's actually easy for chiropractors to incorporate a nutritional aspect into their practices because there are a few critically important, pivotal areas where every patient can benefit and improve their health. In today's toxic world and nutritionally depleted diet, everyone can benefit from a daily organic, plant-based vitamin, mineral, fatty acid supplement to make up the massive dietary deficiencies. That alone can make a huge difference in a patient's energy and mental acuity. — Dr. Jack Tips, Systemic Formulas

Continuing education courses at seminars offer many opportunities to educate oneself on nutrition. Chiropractors seem to have a close network of highly-skilled mentors in their field, which can provide helpful advice and educational resources to each other on how to further their nutritional expertise. — Timothy Terry, Kirkman Group

Search out those companies with hard data and real expertise and learn from those companies. Learning from experts can expedite the learning process. Going to chiropractic conferences and tradeshow are a great way of gathering a lot of data in a small amount of time. This allows chiropractors to learn about new techniques, products and technologies. — Dr. Keith Moeller, American Biotech Labs

Don't wait until you feel like you know everything. That will never happen. You can begin working with nutrition today, e.g. VerVita Products has kept it simple to implement with only 10 nutritional products and 6 essential oils. — Dawn Hoezee, VerVita Products

Become as educated as possible on the subject; attend seminars that train the doctor to be an expert in the field. The Functional Medicine series of classes is a good example, offering the roadmap to achieve excellence in the field by incorporating lab testing, questionnaires, physiology and the dietary, lifestyle and nutritional recommendations for optimal protocols. — Lisa Norris, Nutri-West

Align yourself with a company like OHS that has the research, nutritionist and formulator that you can talk to. Most companies are just copy cats and their formulators don't have extensive organic chemistry knowledge. OHS will be the nutrition expert for you so that you can focus on adjustments and other modalities. — Doug Grant, Optimal Health