

Starting a Chiropractic Epidemic

By Kent Greenawalt

When you hear the word "epidemic," disease is probably the first thing that comes to mind. But behaviors, messages, and products can spread rapidly, just like the outbreak of a virus. *The New York Times* best-selling book, *The Tipping Point*, by Malcolm Gladwell, is based on the idea that major change can happen suddenly and unexpectedly. In any given situation, there is one key moment when everything can change at once; this moment is called *The Tipping Point*.

In July 2005, Apple reported a net income of \$320 million for its fiscal third quarter, ending June 25 - a fivefold increase in net income on a 75 percent jump in revenue. What happened to cause such revolutionary and explosive growth for Apple? The iPod was almost exclusively responsible for this growth - Apple sold 6.2 million iPods in the quarter, generating revenue of \$1.1 billion. You could say that there was an iPod epidemic. Just a few years ago, barely anyone even knew what an iPod was. But now the iPod has tipped, and everyone wants one. iPods aren't the only products that have tipped in recent years - think about cell phones, DVDs, and microwaves.

What if we could make chiropractic tip? What if everyone wanted to get adjusted to stay properly aligned and healthy? What if people thought of chiropractors first for musculoskeletal problems? What if our chiropractic colleges were filled with eager students who wanted to help people by becoming chiropractors? What if your waiting room were always busy? The Campaign for Chiropractic is working to accomplish all of these goals. They may seem improbable to some people, but if I had told you 20 years ago that in the year 2005, almost everyone would carry tiny cell phones with them, would you have believed me?

If we want chiropractic to experience incredible growth, we need to reach for new ideas and new ways of thinking. We can't keep doing the same old thing if we want to tip. We have to innovate and evolve. *The Tipping Point* offers several crucial factors that can make the difference between an idea or product that tips, and one that crashes and burns.

A contagious message. If I say to you, "Just Do It," you will most likely think of Nike and its athletic-themed ads. If someone asks, "Where's the Beef?" everyone remembers that was a slogan for Wendy's hamburgers. You see thousands of advertising messages over the course of your lifetime. Why do you remember these particular slogans decades later, when so many other slogans are instantly forgotten? The answer is that these two slogans were contagious and memorable. These are the kinds of advertising messages that get people talking and can cause a product to tip. In Gladwell's book, he uses the word "sticky"- because these messages stick in your mind.

We're working with the best public relations firms in the business to create a "sticky" message for the Campaign for Chiropractic. We want a message that makes people think "chiropractic" just as quickly as "Where's the Beef?" makes them think of Wendy's. A contagious message is one way we can start a chiropractic epidemic.

The power of the right people. As schoolchildren, we all heard the legend of Paul Revere's midnight ride. The British army was met with armed resistance because Revere managed to alert the townspeople in time. Clearly, "The British are coming!" is about as compelling and contagious as a message can be. But there was another revolutionary named William Dawes who rode through the towns west of Boston at the same time, alerting the people about the British. But these towns didn't gather up their militias, and history doesn't remember the name of William Dawes. Why did Revere's message tip when Dawes' did not?

The answer lies with Paul Revere himself. He was a highly connected individual, and he knew how to reach the people who could sound the alarm. William Dawes didn't know how to get his message to the right people. Even an extraordinarily compelling message will not work if it doesn't reach the right audience.

That's why the Campaign for Chiropractic needs your help. We can't possibly reach everyone with a national campaign. We need chiropractors to take up a grassroots effort and spread the chiropractic message locally. The community relations component of the campaign will help provide tools and information to doctors so that they can promote chiropractic in their hometowns. You know the needs and people in your community far better than someone who doesn't live there. The campaign needs **you** to be a Paul Revere for chiropractic, alerting your community about all the great benefits of chiropractic care.

A small change can make a huge difference. Gladwell also discusses how "Sesame Street" failed miserably with test groups at first. As a last-ditch effort, the producers of the show decided to have the real people interact with the puppets. This seemingly tiny change made a huge difference in how much children

liked the show. Instead of failing, Sesame Street went on to become the most beloved children's show of all time.

A small change could make a huge difference for the future of chiropractic. We currently see seven out of 100 people. If we saw 10 people out of 100, our profession would grow by 43 percent! We don't need to completely reinvent our profession in order to grow. We can continue to provide the same high-quality patient care, and find the small changes that lead to revolutionary growth.

How can you help tip chiropractic? The Campaign for Chiropractic will promote the benefits of chiropractic, educate the public, and gain respect for your profession, all of which will help chiropractic reach its tipping point. Whether you've just started practicing or you've been in practice for 20 years, this campaign will help you by helping your profession **grow**.

We can tip chiropractic, and we can experience unbelievable growth. But we can't do it without you. We need your financial support, and we need you to help us spread the word about chiropractic care. We want you to be involved in your state and national associations, and with your chiropractic alma mater. We know that our profession isn't growing the way it should be, so the time for change is now. The future of chiropractic is in your hands.

If we want to revolutionize chiropractic, we need to bring together a contagious message and the right people to spread that message. Together, we can tip chiropractic and make our profession stronger than it's ever been. Together, we can start an epidemic of positive change - an epidemic of happy, healthy chiropractic patients. We will make this work!

Reference

1. Gladwell M. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000.

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Author's note: The Campaign for Chiropractic is currently seeking volunteers to act as Foundation Spokespersons, who will help raise funds and answer questions about the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress. If you are interested, contact Gene Veno at gveno@foundation4cp.com or via fax at 717-724-4563. Donations to the campaign can be mailed to:

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