

Review of: "Changing chiropractic's subluxation rhetoric: Moving on from 'deniers', 'vitalists', and 'unorthodox', to realists, post-realists, and absurdists"

Timothy Mirtz

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

I have reviewed this article and I wish to point out some fundamental errors within the paper. First and foremost are the following statements:

Statement 1: Page 7, paragraph 5: "Mirtz [83] sits with Newell as being untrained in chiropractic yet offering vocal commentary against the profession's tenets."

Statement 2: Page 8, paragraph 2: "Here I include the writings of Newell, [59] Mirtz, [83] and Chapman-Smith, [84][85] none of whom is trained as a chiropractor yet through some affiliation is seen as a representative of the profession."

Statement 3: Page 9, paragraph 1: "Wardwell's knowledge of who chiropractors are as a profession is second to none, and both Rosner and Jamison, as non-chiropractors, have publications that attest to their understanding of chiropractic as a discipline and which I also consider to be second to none. I am yet to see evidence from Newell or Mirtz or Chapman-Smith about which I could state the same."

Response to these three statements: I believe Dr. Ebrall has failed to do an appropriate credential search which would have been easily accomplished with a LinkedIn search. Below is the link to my professional profile:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/timothy-mirtz-a3925512/>

As one can plainly see, I have a Doctor of Chiropractic degree from Cleveland University (formerly known as Cleveland Chiropractic College) in 1989 and was in active practice in Lawrence, Kansas for 14 years before pursuing higher education in 2001 (Masters degree in 2003 and PhD in 2007). Thus the claim that I have no training or experience as a chiropractor is patently false.

If one views the reference that Dr. Ebrall used to ascertain this information of my educational credentials i.e. a, bTimothy Mirtz. Researchgate. Profile. URL <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Timothy-Mirtz>, my view of the site shows no profile of me nor credentials listed. I can only speculate that it was a wild guess on the part of Dr. Ebrall seeing that I have an affiliation with a non-chiropractic institution would automatically mean "no chiropractic training." By mere possession of this academic and clinical practice experience, I am able to forward to a professional opinion on the state of affairs of the profession.

Dr. Ebrall noted: "There is a line of distinction to be drawn here as not all non-chiropractors who associate with the

profession can be considered absurdists.” Another article that was published that disputes the notion of subluxation as a real construct is a paper that I was the lead author on entitled **An epidemiological examination of the subluxation construct using Hill's criteria of causation** Chiropr Osteopat 2009 Dec 2;17:13.<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3238291/>

This paper studied the subluxation construct from basis of epidemiology of causation as per Hill's Criteria. This study found no evidence of subluxation being attributed to any disease process nor did it (subluxation) have any epidemiology such as incidence, prevalence, morbidity or mortality associated with it. If one is to considered an “absurdist” based on using scientific and biologically plausible clinical evidence and doing what scientists of all stripes should be doing i.e. “being skeptical of claims” and “seeking evidence” then by all means, I am guilty of being an absurdist as it pertains to the chiropractic putative lesion. If I am considered a “subluxation denier”, you may count me in on that charge based on the considerable lack of evidence. In fact, I believe there is more physical evidence for the existence of a North American Ape aka Sasquatch/Bigfoot than there is for existence of a subluxation. This is a link to a non-scientific article:
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/oct/18/osteopaths-chiropractors-back-pain-whose-spine-is-it-anyway>

If one thinks about it seriously, no other profession uses the term of subluxation as a lesion in their clinical diagnostic workups except in orthopedic cases yet none to my knowledge based upon the vertebral bodies. Oh sure, there are those conditions such as atlanto-axial instability but this is a condition that I do not believe any chiropractic manipulative procedure should be enacted upon.

One of the more questionable aspects of Dr. Ebrall's paper is this quote: "Together with 37 self-proclaimed 'expert chiropractors' [103] and some 150 'signatories' to a specific position of chiropractic politics, [104] there are about 200 concessional chiropractors and associates which represents an insignificant sect under 0.2% of all chiropractors."

I find the above to be somewhat silly as this only represents those who have “written” critically about the chiropractic profession and the subluxation. This, of course, is going to be a small percentage, as not all practicing chiropractors are going to be writing their views for publication. Yet, Dr. Ebrall fails to ascertain what the number of “realists” are who have written publicly in peer-reviewed journals and signatories of specific positions of chiropractic politics.

But I wish to extend something I believe Dr. Ebrall is attempting to do with those who disagree with him as per anything pertaining to the chiropractic profession. Dr. Homola, a chiropractor in his book *Inside Chiropractic* (1999, Prometheus Books, Amherst, New York) noted (page 159): “Most chiropractors base their treatment on correcting the ‘vertebral subluxation complex’ and regard any criticism as a threat to their livelihood. Many fear that because chiropractic owes its existence to subluxation theory, the profession cannot afford to tolerate criticism from within.” I also wish to add to Dr. Homola's statement of including the term “from without” meaning that “outside criticism is used as a rallying cry to conjure up Boogeymen for which the profession can unite against the evil horde of subluxation deniers.”

This is made quite evident starting out in Dr. Ebrall's paper when he stated: “At times the chiropractic narrative is vitriolic, perhaps reflective of the emotion inherent in defending DD Palmer's founding principles and tenets in a hostile world.” I

am still trying to figure out how considering a person who does not believe in subluxation is somehow an absurdist and is somehow not vitriolic. Yet, Dr. Ebrall considers “the original chiropractic realist was Daniel David Palmer.” I wish to direct Dr. Ebrall to three papers written by me that will demonstrate some strong criticism of the Palmer's and their “philosophy”.

Mirtz, T. A. (2001). The question of theology for chiropractic: a theological study of the chiropractic prime tenets *Journal of Chiropractic Humanities*, 10(1), 1-33.

Mirtz, T. A. (2000). Reviewing the Green Books: BJ Palmer's biblical usage and opinion on Christianity's central figure. *Journal of the Association for the History of Chiropractic* 20(2),37-47.

Mirtz, T. A. (1999). Universal Intelligence: a theological entity in conflict with Lutheran theology. *Journal of Chiropractic Humanities*, 9(1), 1-17.

But one thing that Dr. Homola in his book noted that is absolutely correct: (page 165): “Think about it for a minute, is chiropractic's foundation so tenuous that the entire profession could be toppled by a single opinion?” I also wish to alert Dr. Ebrall of Dr. Homola's finest work which was “Bonesetting, Chiropractic, and Cultism” (1963, Critique Books, Panama City, Florida). It is, in my opinion, a book that is applicable today as it was in 1963.

In a world in which political polarization is occurring (and the chiropractic profession has been politically polarized since its inception), the need for “absurdist” thinking, as per Dr. Ebrall's designation (although he states he sees both sides of the issue and criticizes both sides) is essentially needed. In nations that value free speech and the expression of free speech that contributes to the marketplace of ideas, it is important to keep consistent that division can be a healthy thing and in reality, let the marketplace determine whose idea(s) have the most merit. I wish to direct Dr. Ebrall to another paper I wrote that talks about the principles that the chiropractic profession should embrace. I am in hopes that he will provide his commentary on this work.

Mirtz, T. A. (2017). A treatise for a new philosophy of chiropractic medicine. *Chiropractic & Manual Therapies*. 25(17):1-15. [PMID: 28286645] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5338096/>

Two principles that I believe are applicable for this review:

Voluntary Community and Involuntary Collectivism

Chiropractic medicine practitioners advocate for individual human rights, achievement, individual responsibility and the power of individual human potential. Chiropractic medicine advocates for the local community to voluntarily empower itself and opposes collectivism that forces individuals and/or groups to the will of an uninterested and unrepresentative entity.

Permanence and Change

Chiropractic medicine embraces the permanence of those things inherent to the operation of healthcare to ensure stability and continuity; for chiropractic medicine to progress it must acknowledge that change is necessary and healthy.

Richard Overly, in his book “The Dictators: Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia” (2004, Konecky & Konecky, Old Saybrook, CT) noted: “In each case (Hitler and Stalin) democracy was defined as the absence of political division and true

representation of popular interests."

In order to have a healthy debate, chiropractic political division will always be a reality and I doubt that Dr. Ebrall nor myself will solve the debate. For a true democracy in chiropractic (and in all things) there must be debate. However, adding to academic discourse is the value as expressed by Voltaire (I may not agree with what you have to say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it) and I applaud Dr. Ebrall's contribution to this debate as I hope he is supportive of my views although he may vehemently disagree. Another Voltaire quote that applies to all parties in this ongoing debate: It is difficult to free fools from the chains they revere.