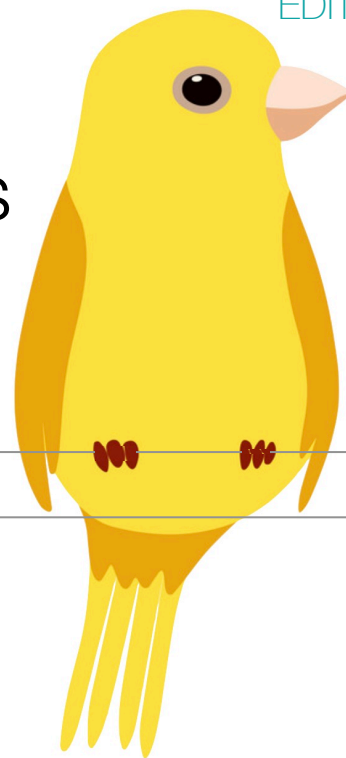


# Gratitude for chiropractic's canaries in the coal-mine.



Phillip Ebrall

Our previous editorial (Ebrall, 2021) expressed concern with a report by Côté et al (2021). We were the first to call out this paper for what we saw it to be, an unashamed use of purported scientific method to set a self-serving political agenda. It is always nervous to make such a big call, especially against persons holding hallowed status in our profession, but today we see they have feet of clay and the *Journal* has been vindicated by not just one, but many canaries calling out their concerns.



Thankfully our profession's canaries are highly reputable scientists, writers, and educators who represent the best of our contemporary thought.

In a nutshell, Côté et al undertook inquiry with questionable methods and with a good dose of spin, turned into into a 'global summit' meant to inform decision makers. Their conclusions were unfavourable to our profession, but of course, were also unfounded as many others now show.

The lead was taken by the newly appointed Chair of the *WFC Research Committee*, Christine Goertz, and her paper Goetz et al (2021). It drew three conclusions, none of them favourable:

- ☀ some statements generated from the Summit were extrapolated beyond the data, have the potential to misrepresent the literature;
- ☀ the current evidence suggests that more research on nonmusculoskeletal conditions is warranted before any definitive conclusions can be made; and, critically
- ☀ Governments, insurers, payers, regulators, educators, and clinicians should avoid using systematic reviews in decisions where the research is insufficient to determine the clinical appropriateness of specific care

Readers should be under no misunderstanding that Goertz et al write with authority. In my Editorial of September 2020 (Ebrall, 2020) I stated 'We are strongly of the view that our profession must move towards research with integrity and we are confident that Goertz will lead the WFC in this direction.' In her role as Chair of the WFC Research Committee Goertz and her colleagues have made a clear statement that the chiropractic research committee will no longer play politics and

will instead exercise their considerable skills in producing quality research outputs that will advance the profession in the clinical sense.

The *Journal's* Editorial Board has concluded that Goetz et al are correct in their expressed concerns that Côté et al (2021):

*'Privileged certain forms of evidence over others' and that this 'may ultimately be a political act, not a scientific one'; and*

*Made 'strong policy implications based on weak scientific evidence' which we agree is indeed 'a cause for concern'.*

However we question their view that is *'disconcerting'* for policy-makers, to whom Côté et al directed their conclusion, to be excluded from discussion regarding findings that they are recommended to follow.

Our concern is that policy-makers are expected to make policy based on the best-available evidence. They are not researchers but may well benefit from expert research guidance of the nature Goetz and both the WFC and ICA are able to offer. We see it is erroneous to bring policy-makers to the table while evidence is being formulated; this is a specialised, high-skill process far beyond consensus arguments and other confrontational styles of Western decision-making.

Let the policy-makers be informed of the evidence and what it says, perhaps by commissioned reports from appropriate panels of clinical experts and researchers, and don't confuse policy making with evidence generation. Evidence interpretation and application? Yes. Evidence generation? No. Understanding and meaning? Well, this editorial proposes we leave that to our philosophers.

### More canaries in our coal-mine

From the *'articles in press'* section of JMPT, accessed 18 June 2021, I report the following:

- Steiman I. Re: Goertz et al. Extrapolating Beyond the Data. Correspondence. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther.* DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmpt.2021.04.006>. Steiman wrote *'My concern is that when considering benefits of SMT for non-MSK conditions, some randomized controlled trials that should have been considered may have been excluded. Caution must be taken about what research is considered for review when proposing policy.'*
- Budgell BS. Goertz et al. Extrapolating Beyond the Data. Correspondence. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther.* DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmpt.2021.04.005>. Astutely, Budgell observed that *'I point out the obvious, which is that the entire systematic review process is as much a social exercise as a scientific one, and so may be subject to strong and even destructive social influences.'*
- Scaringe J, Nagare MA, Russell R, et al. Extrapolating Beyond the Data. Correspondence. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther.* DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmpt.2021.04.004>. Scaringe et al were unimpressed: *'The overall paucity of high-quality evidence either for or against effectiveness, the threat to biological plausibility of collapsing 5 heterogeneous disorders into a single category, and careful consideration of best practices for use of evidence in policymaking suggests the need for their more accurate and cautious conclusion.'*
- Haavik H. Comment about Extrapolating Beyond the Data. Correspondence. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther.* DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmpt.2021.04.001>. Haavik, a leading chiropractic scientist specialising in neurology, noted *'A systematic review of only clinical literature cannot, in any case, inform readers about the mechanisms around how spinal dysfunction and the autonomic nervous system are connected. A systematic review limited to only a few clinical trials should not make any comments whatsoever about basic science'*

*mechanisms, which would require a review of the basic science literature, not a review consisting exclusively of clinical studies.'*

- Pohlman KA. Support of "A Fall From the Summit" by Goertz et al. Correspondence. J Manipulative Physiol Ther. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmpt.2021.04.003>. As a participant in the sham global meeting her biting observation is *'The real conclusion should be as suggested by Goertz et al. I am hopeful that future Summit events can conduct and adopt more rigorous methodology to develop evidence-based implications and conclusions.'*
- Hawk C. Comment on Goertz et al article. Correspondence. J Manipulative Physiol Ther. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmpt.2021.04.008>. Another globally respected chiropractic scientist, Hawk observed *'I commend Goertz et al. for articulately presenting a case for caution in the premature development of policies on appropriate patient care when those policies are based on evidence that is as yet insufficient to definitively determine effectiveness.'*
- Holt KR. Comment About Extrapolating Beyond the Data. J Manipulative Physiol Ther. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmpt.2021.04.002>. In his well-known pragmatic manner Holt cleared stated *'I support the alternate analysis by Goertz et al that evidence-based policy decisions should be informed by broader considerations, not a single systematic review based on weak scientific evidence that contradicted findings from other systematic reviews.'*
- Morgan WE. Agenda-driven summit. J Manipulative Physiol Ther. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmpt.2021.04.012> Dr Morgan wrote: *'Although I do believe that this review will be implemented into the chiropractic curriculum, it is not in the manner that the Summit likely intended. I believe that this work will be used for years to come in chiropractic education as an example of what appears as partiality and agenda-driven research versus what I consider to be the ideal - discovery-driven research. Specifically, it is my opinion that the following be considered: With what appears to have been a preconceived conclusion that would advance a political agenda, a meeting was strategically developed and disguised as a prestigious event within the chiropractic profession.'*

Perhaps the most telling comment is from the highly respected and well-regarded Dennis M. Marchiori, Chancellor and CEO, Palmer College of Chiropractic, Davenport, Iowa ( see *Overextrapolation, Missed Opportunities, and Ladders on the Wrong Walls*, DOI <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmpt.2021.04.009>). He summarised this dreadful situation thus:

*'As Goertz et al. suggest, it is indeed fortunate the Summit did not assemble decades ago to conduct a parallel effort on SMT and musculoskeletal disorders resulting in narrow conclusions, restrictive policy recommendations, and other forms of extreme extrapolation. If they had, we may not have realized many of the important milestones in research and professional growth I have witnessed over my administrative tenure at Palmer College of Chiropractic. These include high patient satisfaction in chiropractic teaching clinics and field practices; access to extramural funding; chiropractic services for the military; execution of pragmatic trials to study chiropractic care; partnerships with world-renowned institutions, research organizations, and government agencies; and research, training, and professional integration of our training programs and practices.'*

At the time of going to press, the Journal noted a new contribution and given its author, it is an essential inclusion in this piece.

Scott Haldeman, whose stature in the profession makes Côté and his crew look like saddlesores, wrote *'It is the responsibility of the research community to study and explain observations noted by patients and clinicians who have direct experience with the intervention.'* DOI <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmpt.2021.04.010>. Clearly, this is where Côté has failed.

What we have before us is an hitherto unseen phenomenon in chiropractic. We have at last matured to the point that fake research and fake claims can be called out, and called out strongly by seemingly unrelated scientists who actually behave as scientists should, placing evidence before politics. We can only add that we certainly hope we never again hear from these now isolated rats in our ranks ever again.

### **Rats in the ranks?**

There is value in publishing the full list of coauthors who signed off, knowingly, on this disgraceful exercise. As you read through them, make a mental note of their institutional affiliation and start asking questions of our education managers. An important point is made about academic freedom and whether it allows a tenured academic to spout nonsense as second-rate, grade-school science, or whether such freedom must be responsibly used in a manner the institution can support. In particular, does RMIT University endorse the position of its academic Amanda Kimpton? Does Macquarie University endorse the position of its academic Michael Swain? Does CQUniversity endorse the position of its academic Andrew Vitiello? Does CMCC endorse the position of its academic Silvano Mior? And so on.

On the other hand, should we bother worrying about these people? They have lost any credibility they may have once had. All are now self-branded as inconsequential players exposed by the goodness within our profession for their ego-centric plan to bring us all down to their pitiful political level. Instead, the canaries have roared (metaphorically) and we can now preemptively ignore future contributions from the following:

Pierre Côté, Jan Hartvigsen, Iben Axén, Charlotte Leboeuf-Yde, Melissa Corso, Heather Shearer, Jessica Wong, Andrée-Anne Marchand, J. David Cassidy, Simon French, Gregory N. Kawchuk, Silvano Mior, Erik Poulsen, John Srbely, Carlo Ammendolia, Marc-André Blanchette, Jason W. Busse, André Bussières, Carolina Cancelliere, Henrik Wulff Christensen, Diana De Carvalho, Katie De Luca, Alister Du Rose, Andreas Eklund, Roger Engel, Guillaume Goncalves, Jeffrey Hebert, Cesar A. Hincapié, Maria Hondras, Amanda Kimpton, Henrik Hein Lauridsen, Stanley Innes, Anne-Laure Meyer, David Newell, Søren O'Neill, Isabelle Pagé, Steven Passmore, Stephen M. Perle, Jeffrey Quon, Mana Rezai, Maja Stupar, Michael Swain, Andrew Vitiello, Kenneth Weber, Kenneth J. Young & Hainan Yu

It is not for us to wonder what motivated these people, but we would serve our majority part of the profession better to be alert to their future attempts to destroy chiropractic from within.

### **A moral question**

A valid question is, '*would this Journal ever accept a sub mission from any of the above discredited individuals?*' The answer, without hesitation, is 'yes', for two important reasons, each being somewhat novel in the world of chiropractic publishing.

This *Journal* does not have a preconceived political position in the world of chiropractic. We welcome submissions from all, and submit each without pre-judgement to our standard process of peer-review, where the author is blinded. When our reviewers consider a paper has merit and deserves to be published, we act.

We will not censor those on the list of complicit authors of the Côté paper and if any submission from any named author passes our peer-review, then it will be published.

Readers will be left to judge such works on their published merit.

### **Thank you, Iowa Plan**

Medical protagonist, and chiropractic antagonist, Throckmorton, had it right in 1962 when, in the *Iowa Plan*\* he wrote to the effect that it would be the mixers who would cause most damage

within chiropractic. We are certainly seeing the expression of the American Medical Association's plan to 'contain and eliminate' chiropractic when we see nonsense of the like of Côté et al's paper. If this is the best the confused 'mixers' in our ranks can do, then we think our profession is fairly safe, going forward.

We have now reached the point where we not only have our own bullshit detectors, we are not afraid to let them sound the alarm.

### Thank you, Lou Sportelli

*Fluctuat nec mergitur*

In 2018 Dr Lou Sportelli commissioned Howard Wolinsky to write the story of what we casually call '*The Wilk Trial*'. I say 'casually' because along with many readers I lived the trial and was in the class at PIT when Chicago chiropractor, Dr. Chester Wilk visited and spoke about it to us. Many were involved, but it was '*Wilk et al*' who brought the action and invested some 14 years in seeing to its reasonable and fair conclusion.

We are well aware there will be many readers who may know nothing or next-to-nothing about this watershed event. It is too momentous to dismiss in a line or two in this place, yet it is of such significance that it must become known to every chiropractic student and recent graduate globally.

Why? Because it is literally the reason why you are learning chiropractic today or practicing as you have been trained.

It is the reason you will not go to jail for practicing chiropractic, unless you live in South Korea or under another repressive regime where political medicine dominates.

It is the reason you are in a position to build a relationship with medical practitioners and medically-dominated health care facilities around your practice.

In short, the Wilk trial is the David which slayed the medical Goliath and freed chiropractors world-wide to practice as an equal in the marketplace to medical practitioners. At the time the *American Chiropractic Association* (ACA) came to support the overall endeavour however there was a realisation of the enormity of the situation which naturally allowed some to be timid. The fighters emerged and it is fair to mention George McAndrews, Jerry McAndrews, Chester Wilk, Mike Pedigo, and Lou Sportelli himself. It is frankly a wonderful thing that Sportelli, as one

involved at the coal-face, has now funded Wolinsky to carefully, accurately and thoroughly document the story. It is a significant part of our profession's history from which we must all learn.

We collectively owe so much to all involved in the decade-long trial and also to leaders like Sportelli who understand its significance. The book he commissioned is now published and available and I urge you to buy your copy and read it. Go [here](#) to read more about it and [here](#) to buy the ebook. For goodness sakes, its only twenty bucks but it is a million-dollar read in its importance and significance to chiropractic today.

My gratitude is expressed to a dear colleague in Brisbane who gifted me a copy



Australia's own, Dr Michael McKibben, with the lawyer for the Wilk vs. AMA trial, George McAndrews (left) who assured Michael that the global conspiracy would continue, regardless of the \$12 million fine.



of this book. I think we should each do likewise, in particular to our students as a way of paying forward for our profession. Without hesitation this lovely little thriller must become required reading in every chiropractic program around the world.

‘Thank you’ Dr Sportelli, and especially ‘thank you’ Dr Chester Wilk.

### Contain and Eliminate - Review

Howard Wolinsky. Contain and Eliminate. The American Medical Association’s conspiracy to destroy chiropractic. © Lous Sportelli. Details [pmp@aol.com](mailto:pmp@aol.com), buy [here](#), now.

This is a truncated review as this book has been referred to in positive terms in this Editorial. To summarise, this work by Wolinsky is essential reading. Thanks to the generosity of Dr Lou Sportelli, you can go [here](#) to buy the ebook for pennies.

This book makes reference to [The Iowa Plan](#) and to the insider’s expose of the AMA, *In the Public Interest*, a revelation of the AMA’s Committee on Quackery. This *Journal* has long carried a copy of [The Iowa Plan](#) and now adds an electronic version of *In the Public Interest*. Click either link for your free copy.

Now is the time to get the trifecta of truth about organised medicine’s longstanding commitment to ‘contain and eliminate’ chiropractic. This is not a conspiracy theory, it is historical fact. Inform yourself now.



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