

# Contain and Eliminate. Howard Wolinsky

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Reviewer: Peter Rome

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**Book:** Howard Wolinsky. Contain and Eliminate.

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**Indexing Terms:** chiropractic; Wilk Trial; history

## Review

If ever one thought that political medicine was different to that of the open-minded medical practitioners you might meet professionally or socially, especially ones who may have become patients, you would be right. They can be misleadingly different.

This recent (2020) book by Wolinsky relates the unethical political tactics to retain health sector dominance by a powerful professional medical association. The detail explored really puts the central issue in perspective. (1) It makes a more detailed discussion of his earlier volume - *The Serpent and the Staff*. (2).

While effects of the case eventually eased some restrictions, other aspects have not. Changing intransigence can be a very gradual process. There has been entrenched opposition to the expansion of chiropractic and other health profession over many decades in Australia as well.

It was not just the AMA(US) that Wilk et al were up against, but other medical organisations. These included the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, the American College of Physicians, the American College of Surgeons, and the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Hospitals, the organisations settled early. The American College of Surgeons and the American College of Radiology remained in the case with the AMA(US) for the duration. (1) Charges were dismissed against the American College of Physicians, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons and surprisingly, the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Hospitals

Interestingly, The American Hospital Association, the American Academy of Physical Medicine and rehabilitation, the Illinois State Medical Society, the Chicago Medical Society and the American Osteopathic Association settled before the final hearing. (1)

*... essential reading for every chiropractor and student of chiropractic. Wolinsky brings the inside story of the famous Wilk Trial, the event which cemented the legitimacy of chiropractic.*



The case started in 1976, was conducted through four hearings including three appeals until the US Supreme Court upheld the 1992 decision – a 16 year time span. Settlement has been unofficially estimated at \$20,000,000. In addition the chiropractic Kentuckiana Children’s Centre was a beneficiary under the settlement. (3)

Mention must be made of the skill, dedication and perseverance of the lead counsel Mr George McAndrews, as well as the plaintiffs Drs Wilk, Pedigo, Bryden and Lumsden. Mr McAndrews was a patent attorney who turned to anti-trust matters just for this case, He was from a chiropractic family with his father, and other relatives all chiropractors. The early chiropractors experienced occasional cutting ridicule which may have inspired George McAndrew as he witnessed disparaging name-calling upon his father - a chiropractor. (1)

Wolinsky states that there were over 425 million patient visits to alternative practitioners in 1990 in the US, this compared to 388 million to medical physicians. No wonder the AMA(US) saw the trend as a territorial fiscal threat. (1, p 167). However, the success of the model of care and the success of the Wilk case appears to have opened some but not all doors in the US. There are now chiropractic interns in hospitals - mainly in Veteran Affairs’ hospitals, with over 100 VA hospitals in the US having ‘chiropractic clinics staffed by full-time doctors of chiropractic’. (1, p 161)

It is noted that the ‘AMA’ (Aust) is regarded as a registered trade union. (4, 5) It is suggested that there is a significant difference between political medicine and individual medical practitioners as there is in demarcation differences between trade unions. However, when self-appointed informal bodies like FoSiM (a charity no less) speak out - self-interest seems to ignore the science.

Is there a similar trend in Australia? I would say yes, as the developments seem to have a ring of similarity. (6) One only has to look at the submissions made to the Safer Care Victoria Review to see the theme and deliberate false claims about harm with childhood manipulation. Given these unsubstantiated arguments in the available submissions by the AMA (Vic), the Spine Society of Australia, the Australian Orthopaedic Association and the RACGP (Submissions available online), and the previous comments from one particular medical academic, using terms such as dangerous, damage, implausible, unsafe, and unscientific, The medical organisations had the opportunity to produce any evidence to their claims of harmful practices to ‘*children under 12*’, but they could not substantiate them. (7)

Medicine’s reticence about spinal manipulation over the years, its opposition and obstructions, put the Hippocratic Oath under review particularly when Wilk states that medicine is now plagiarising chiropractic under the names of physiatry, manipulative medicine, physical medicine, manual medicine, and vertebrotherapy. (8, p 156)

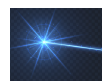
When prominent people become patients the profile of alternative professions posed another conundrum for political medicine. Such notable patients include: Mrs Charles Mayo (wife of Mayo Clinic founder), Mahatma Gandhi, Princess Dianna, President Harry Truman, President Ronald Reagan, Chiang Kai Shek, Australian state and federal politicians, major sporting personalities and professional teams in the US. These patients have access to the best and most expensive care that medicine has to offer, yet had to turn to chiropractic for help. If chiropractic care is both necessary and good enough for these people, surely it is good enough for the general population. (More extensive list in the Chiropractic History Journal – [email author for details](#))

After outlining the unethical political practices in the US, the end of the book notes some of the positive changes for chiropractic that have been attributed to the positive Wilk decision. (1, 9, 10). It also portrays how political medicine misrepresented and mistreated chiropractors.

Changes have been made in the US, but it is a slow evolution – and way ahead of Australia.

To be a little critical, I found the line-breaks, sentence-breaks, and the word spacing could be improved, and the index page numbers were not quite accurate.

I enjoyed this book and the earlier one by Wolinsky, (1, 2) as well as the two books by Chester Wilk (3, 8) himself. It is highly recommended reading.



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