

with Jon Kec, D.C.

CHIROPRACTICAL

THE 2% REALITY: HOW WE CLOSE CHIROPRACTIC'S WIDEST GAP



Jon Kec, DC

Welcome back to Chiropractical. I'm your host, Jon Kec, and we're recording again from the NCMIC booth here at FCA's The National in Orlando. It's an amazing atmosphere down here, activity everywhere, so much energy.

It's, it just shows how strong the profession truly is right now. Um, today, we're gonna tackle a, a topic that's critical to the future of both healthcare, and specifically the chiropractic profession as a whole, diversity, equity, inclusion, and healthcare advocacy.

To help us unpack all this today, I'm joined by an extraordinary leader in our field, Dr. Sharifa Clarke. She has more than 15 years of experience, and Dr. Clarke is a highly accomplished chiropractor, educator, public speaker, mentor, and leader. Dr. Clarke's contributions have been recognized throughout numerous honors, including the Florida Chiropractic Association's Emerging Leader Award, Broward College Professor of the Year, Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County 100 Outstanding Women of Broward County Award, and the American Black Chiropractic Association's Chiropractor of the Year.

Throughout her career, Dr. Clarke has served in leadership positions at both the local and national levels. She currently practices in Frisco, Texas, and serves as the president of the American Black Chiropractic Association. She's on the front lines of shaping the next generation of DCs and fighting for healthcare equity.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke, thank you so much for joining us here at Chiropractic-All at FCA's The National.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Well, thank you so much for having me. Of course. It's my complete honor and pleasure.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Yeah. Well, I'm excited to talk today. Um, I don't think we've ever really had the, the chance to chat, so I, I appreciate the few minutes before this to get to know you a little bit, but-

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Of course

Host Jon Kec, DC

I wanna dive into kind of what we're here to talk about, right? Okay. And that's our profession.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Yes.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Um, so, you know, let's start with you- Mm-hmm ... before we kinda get into how we're gonna impact and change things. Tell me a little bit about you. So I know you mentioned practice, or, or I should say licensed both here in Florida, but also t- in Texas, currently practicing in Texas.

Yep. How'd you get into chiropractic? What was your first, uh, first gateway in, let's say?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Well, you know what? My first gateway in was actually when I was a teenager in high school. Okay. So, like, my senior year in high school, I was in a really bad car accident.

And, of course, you know, we got in a car accident, and my mother and I, we went to see a chiropractor. Um, an amazing chiropractor who was just so am- Like, he was, like, not only a chiropractor, but he also was a doctor. And I say that because sometimes people forget that chiropractors are doctors. Like, we are- Sure ... full doctors. Yes, indeed. We learn all these different things in order to make sure we're treating the patient correctly.

And through that experience, this chiropractor, not only did he treat me for my injuries, he also is the one who discovered I had a brain tumor.

And it was from- Okay ... his thoroughness. Because he is a doctor and a chiropractor, but he definitely did his due diligence to see- Yeah hey, yes, this may be from the accident, but something here doesn't seem right. Okay. And he did his due diligence and did the additional testing that was needed- to diagnose that. Wow. Something that went undiagnosed for several years, actually.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Go, hold on. Guys. So how old were you when this happened?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

I was 17.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Okay. And how long into the course of care did, did all of this come out?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

So it, it was pretty early on, so we, we, he did X-rays. That was back when, you know, he, he had a X-ray in his office. Okay. And he had to dip the, the film in the liquid. Yeah. I know, the old school way. He's developing in the dark room. Right. The old school way. And so the X-ray got developed, and he was like, "You know what? I think my liquid is old, because there is this weird, weird structure on the, the skull part of your X-ray." Okay. "So I'm gonna order some new solution-" And we're gonna- "... and we're gonna just redo these X-rays in a couple of weeks."

So we went on with care, and about a couple of weeks later he came back and we redid those X-rays with the new solution, and that weird structure he saw on the X-ray was still there.

And he was like, "Hmm." He's like- "... you know what? It's still there, so it's not the solution. I'm gonna go ahead and order a brain MRI for you.

I know you're not-" Okay "... really having any headaches from this accident."

But- Yeah ... I'm gonna order this brain MRI to see if I see anything abnormal."

And lo and behold, I had a brain stem tumor that was the size of a golf ball.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Oh my God. Oh, so- A- again, I, I don't even know. I don't know. Uh, okay, so he, he found it.

It, what, what, what was next?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

What was next was he referred me out to a neuro-oncologist. You know, 'cause at that point, I think he... I think that was the first he's seen, like- Yeah ... that in a patient. Not something we see frequently. Not, not very frequently, right? And so he referred me out to a neuro-oncologist, and from there, I actually saw additional neuro-oncologists before I actually found one- that was actually gonna do the surgery.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Okay. 'Cause that one, he was, you know... It just didn't, that one didn't feel right, right? Sure, yep. So-

Host Jon Kec, DC

Uh, if you, if, if you're doing brain surgery-

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Right, right ... you wanna- Correct ... gotta be a good connection. It gotta be a good connection. So then we found a second one, and he was like, "You know what?

I've been practicing for over 30 years. I'm not even qualified to do this surgery." So he referred me- Okay ... to a different neuro-oncologist.

And funny enough, that oncologist's name was Dr. Heroes.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Uh, I, I think it fits.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke:

Right?

Host Jon Kec, DC:

It might be what he was destined for ...

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Exactly. And he was the one who was able to do the surgery successfully.

Okay. 'Cause at the time, the location of the tumor, there was only two surgeons in the state who could d- do it, and Dr. Heroes was one- Okay ... and I believe his wife was actually the other one.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Power family. Okay. Yes. Well, I am, I'm so glad to hear that they obviously found that and- Yes ... the journey h- from there has been what it has been, but- wow, that is... I, I, I feel like every time I ask that question, I, I get a s- not every time, a lot of times when I ask that question, I get a similar answer of, "You know, I was in a car accident, I had a sports injury, I saw a chiropractor." This is the first time I've ever heard anything like that. Yeah. So I'm so glad to hear, though- that everything there. So what about the chiropractor? Is that somebody that you still are in contact with, somebody you still talk to?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Well, that's a... Like I said, he was an amazing mentor. He has since passed- Okay ... a few years back. Okay. But, like, throughout chiropractic school, like, that was my go-to person.

Okay. Every break that I had, I came back to South Florida. I shadowed him. When I graduated, I worked for him part-time. Like, he was- Okay ... the... If something was happening, he's the one who I called, "Hey, Doc, what do you think about this?" Yeah. And he always gave me the great unfiltered advice that- ... a young chiropractor needed.

Okay. So he was definitely very instrumental in developing my chiropractic mind. He was the one who told me, "You need to look at the whole patient, not just what they're walking in for." Okay. Because there could be other things going on that you're able... Even if you're unable to help with it, you're able to refer them out-

Host Jon Kec, DC

Absolutely. Okay. Okay. Well, that was a much more- Mm-hmm ... intense start than I was expecting, but I love it. Um, okay. Well, let's, let's kinda dive into the, the diversity, equity, inclusion side a little bit. Okay. So, you know, you obviously are exceptionally involved with the ABCA, uh, American Black Chiropractors Association, ABCA. Uh, so you may know a lot of this better than I do, but what do diversity numbers look like in the profession right now?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

The numbers?

Whoo. So right now, as a whole, roughly Roughly about 2% of chiropractors are Black. Which, that's not, that's not really a lot.

Host Jon Kec, DC

No, at all.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

That's like a drop in a bucket, right? Okay. Now, what the numbers are showing, what it's trending towards, it's showing that the younger generation is more diverse.

So that 2%- Okay ... encompasses the younger generation and the older generation. So basically chiropractors 60 and over- makes up about 0.6% are Black.

Chiropractors 30 and younger makes up roughly around 6 or so percent. So combined is roughly- Is- ... 2% ... two.

With all those, with all the age gaps. Okay. So that's what it looks like right now.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Okay. So we're kind of seeing the shift currently. Yes. What about in schools? Do we know what enrollment numbers look like? Is that continuing that trend and, and changing, pushing towards 6, 7, 8%? Or where are we at?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

So right. Correct. So enrollment has increased for minorities. Okay. And right now in school is roughly about 7% that's enrolling. Completion, that's another question. But- Okay ... enrollment is around 7%.

Host Jon Kec, DC

So I don't- I don't wanna dance over that. Completion. Yes. I- is it... I, I, maybe the best way to ask this question, so you tell me if one of these makes more sense. Of that, you know, 7% or so, is, uh, is 50% of that 7% graduating? Is it 80%? What does that number look like right now?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

The, the numbers is not 100%. It's definitely more than 50%. Okay. But that's still not enough, right? And of course there are numerous factors that's probably affecting that. But about 7% are going in. We'll probably say maybe 5% graduating.

Okay. And then a little bit even less than that actually staying in the profession and practicing.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Okay. Is there anything that, you know, you can think of that is attributing both positively to the increase, but also potentially to some of those lower than desired graduation and sticking in the profession numbers that we're currently seeing? Something that, that, you know, we wanna make people aware of, whether it's people coming into the profession as students, whether it's school administrators, state association and board members- other providers in the profession. What, what are, what are we seeing that's, that's helped the rise, and what do we have to do to continue it on that trajectory?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Perfect. So some of the things that I've noticed that have helped increase, um, enrollment are, you know, it's the age of social media, right?

So some people are seeing more about chiropractic. You know, they're going for sports-related injuries. You know, they're seeing them, chiropractors on the sidelines at NFL games. Yep. So people are seeing chiropractors more just out and about. Right? So as a result, I believe that's contributing to the increase.

I know that a lot of schools have started doing s- direct initiatives in certain schools. Some of them they're going into HBCUs and grabbing those pre-medical students- Okay ... who are in the medical realm, who is like, they wanna be in medi- medicine somewhere- Whether it's some form of doctor, dentist, healthcare professional, but they're, they're grabbing those students and saying, "Hey, what about chiropractic as an option?"

Okay. And they're inviting them out to different, you know, inter- uh, prospective students events. Okay. And I think that has helped to increase the numbers going into school. Okay. It's just that the outreach that I feel like some of these chiropractic schools have been doing, as well as the ABCA, we do outreach- Sure, at every convention. In any area that we go to, we always find groups that have a bunch of students, and we bring them to our convention- Okay ... and

show them what chiropractic is, go through some things, let them come to a mixer with some of the chiropractors there so they can ask questions, learn more about the profession.

So I think just outreach in general has been helping increasing people thinking, "Hey, chiropractic is a profession that I think I might actually enjoy."

Host Jon Kec, DC

Okay. Okay. Um, I, I wanna come back to some of the challenges, but before we do, so with the ABCA, what would you say, and I don't wanna put any schools i- in a negative light.

So what are some of the schools that are doing a really good job of drawing in large groups that you guys have identified and say like, "Hey, we..." Or state associations. These are the people that we are, are, right now are our champions for diversity in chiropractic"?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

If I... Off the top of my head, I will say Life University. Um, Parker University. And Palmer. So those are three of the top. Now, all of them are doing better. I mean, there was a point where, you know. But I think right now, those are the three that I've noticed- Okay ... that they have done well. Oh, and Logan.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Okay

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Yes. Yeah. And I think part of the reason why some of these schools are doing well is that, like for example, Logan, on their board of directors for the school, they have a Black chiropractor on the board, and they've kept one on the board.

Right? Um, as well as they're having faculty. One of our board members for the ABCA, Dr. Gordon Noel, he is an associate dean at Parker.

So seeing those people on your campuses, it helps.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Absolutely. Is, are either of those, uh, appointments newer, would you say, in the last year or two? Or they've been a little longer standing?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

So Dr. Gordon Noel been an associate dean since, I don't know. He's been a faculty member at Parker in some capacity, and he's been- Okay ... associate dean for several years. Um, for Logan, um, one of ABCA's past president, Dr. Rodney Williams- Mm ... he was on their board for 10 years. Okay. And then currently, right now, Dr. Xavier Tipler, he's on their board.

So, you know, Logan has probably been one of the ones who were at the forefront of this- Yeah right, if I'm, if I'm gonna be honest. Right. And I'm, I'm, I'm Palmer proud, let's be clear. Palmer proud.

But Logan has, has been at one of the forefronts of this. Okay. Yeah.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Okay. Um, so let's, let's spin back, right? So w- we're seeing increasing enrollment, we're seeing increasing, uh, overall percentages of the, the practicing population, um, now from a minority perspective, but there's still challenges.

Mm-hmm. There's still challenges to get people into the profession, get them through school- Mm-hmm ... get them to stick in practice. Mm-hmm. What are some of those things that, that you are, are currently seeing, and some of the things that yourself, the ABCA, the schools are, are working on to try to really make sure that everybody feels empowered and supported inside the profession?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Oh, yeah. Perfect. So- There's a few things that's contributing to that, right? So some of it financial, right?

You know, as a minority, sometimes you're going into professional schools- Mm ... but you don't have the same resources as everyone else. Okay. You don't have the same generational financial backing. You don't have the same help from your parents because unfortunately, your parents probably can't help.

So financially, you're already in between a rock and a hard place. And even with, with these newer regulations that have come out with a Grad PLUS loan, that's making it even a- Even harder a larger barrier- Sure ... financially. So financially is one of the things where you're going through the program, but then you run out of funding.

So now you run out of funding. Okay. So I've, I've known students who they ran out of funding, so they'll take the semester off, go work a full-time job, save up-

And then go the next semester- Move and they're, like, doing that back and forth. And unfortunately, sometimes that's not sustainable- No ... and they end up giving up, right? Yeah. Absolutely. So just factors financially has really contributed- Okay ... contributed to that. Um, some of the things students going to school, if they're at a school where the minority population is significantly less- sometimes they feel alone.

You know? They feel alone, and they're, they're not-- They feel like they don't have any help. They don't-- They feel like they don't know who to turn to, and they're just kind of lost. Okay. And they don't have someone on campus who looks like them who could say, "Hey, let me help you along the way."

So what the ABCA is doing We have, we have amazing chiropractic student chapters- Okay ... on almost every chiropractic campus.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Awesome.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

And we have our, a, a part of our board, we have student leaders who are elected by the different regions. Okay. And we have our central student rep, eastern student rep, western student rep, and national student rep, and then we have three doctors who are basically over them- Okay to help usher in those students. So our regional student director, student representative, they're the ones who are always in constant communication with their schools and their regions to make sure that, hey, you have all, all the resources you need. We're setting up webinars for them.

We have a mentorship program where, hey, n- we have mentors here.

You need a doctor to shadow, you have someone who you need to ask questions, you know, you and this doctor will probably link better. Let's pair you with this doctor to see, hey, can they help you out?

Our communications chair, Dr. Rector, over here- ... we call her the unofficial, uh, SAFCA advisor for Palmer, Florida. Even though she lives in Tennessee, right? She's a Palmer, Florida grad, but she always reaches back and makes sure that the students are okay.

And she's like a broad mentor for the students- Yeah ... right? And that's what we're trying to do. We're trying to see, hey, what do you need? What can we help with in guiding you on this journey?

We're actually currently, with this new, um, financial difficulty that a lot of students are facing, or more students are facing- Sure ... um, we were able to research some additional resources, um, that we're actually creating a page on our website to put them all there- Okay ... for students who may need some additional help that they can't get from the federal government f- from some private institution.

You know, the ABCA, we're a nonprofit, and as much as we want to financially give to everyone, we actually can't 'cause we- Of course ... we don't actually have it to do. So we're like, at least we're able to create these resources- Yeah ... so we can guide the students in the area that could b- best suit them- to, like, complete their education.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Okay. Are we in a place where we can talk about any of those a little bit right now, or do we have a timeline on when the webpage may go live just for students that are potentially in that financial bind to, to give them some, some starting po- starting spots now?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

That webpage should be live within 30 days. We've already started working on it. Awesome. Um, we have the resources pulled together. It should be live within 30 days.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Back to the challenges side. Anything, you know, in practice that you're, you're i- you have identified as a, a main problem point to keeping people in practice, being successful in practice?

Um, I'm gonna guess mentorship is probably one of them, right? Yes. People that don't find a mentor, they, they practice by themselves and- Right ... they're struggling for whatever the reason may be. Um, but what else, or, or expand on that, but the, what are you seeing as challenges to people in practice right now?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

So, you know, coming in s- in school, um- The schools do the best they can, but we don't get a lot of business. They're do- it's a lot better now. A lot better now than when I was a student. They get a lot more now. However, when you're going into practice, sometimes unfortunately, you know, they negotiate bad contracts in the beginning.

Mm-hmm. And they get in with a practitioner, and they get a sour taste in their mouth, right? And some people, they get that sour taste and they don't know how to shake it off, and then they're like, "Oh, oh gosh, this is not working out," and they wanna walk away. So what we're really trying to do is truly bridge a gap.

Um, our mentorship department or chair have been re- recently tasked with grabbing those students who are about to graduate in the next six months or the ones who have recently graduated to keep them in practice. Okay. So whether that is physically practicing in the clinic, or whether it is, you know, maybe their strengths are in academics- being on the academic side, or maybe it's in research. Okay. So keeping them within the chiropractic profession- Okay ... in some way or fashion- Yeah ... to continue increasing the diversity within chiropractic across all the avenues in chiropractic, but, you know, keeping them in the profession doing so. Yeah.

Host Jon Kec, DC

So we've, we've talked a bit about the provider side. Mm-hmm. But I think a big piece that is exceptionally important here is the patient side, right? Yes. Because we have patients of, of all race, gender, all these things, different, you know, personal backgrounds, and I think what happens a lot of times is we don't click with a provider, right?

As a patient, that is. We don't click with a provider, and that may be a chiropractor, that may be our dentist- Mm-hmm ... our MD, it doesn't matter.

But when that happens, we see people walk away from care. Mm-hmm. And we, I, I think that may honestly be a large contributor to some of the health-based problems we have in this country right now.

People don't feel like they can be seen, heard, and understood. Yep. So when we start looking at patient populations, you know, what is the biggest impact that having this diversity among providers can have? You know, where do we see increasing from 2% to 6% to 10% to 15 to 20? What kind of meaningful change are we gonna see in a patient population, or for a patient population, I should say, as that percentage increases?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Well, a lot of patients, they wanna make sure that the provider that they're seeing, even if they don't look like them, that they understand them. And while we need to always have the highest standard of care when practicing, that's number one, but when a patient come into your clinic and they are not like you, maybe religiously- Mm maybe ethnic-wise, you have to make sure that you're listening to the patient, that's number one.

That you are making sure that you're communicating effectively to the patient. And that you're asking questions.

So perfect example, I recently had a patient who came to me after going to another provider somewhere else, and they felt like the provider did not listen to, to her. And this patient, she was African American, and the provider was not that... She, 'cause she, she gave them... This is a patient who's been to a chiropractor pretty much her whole life.

And so she, she went to, she came to me and she said, "You know, I told that provider that this particular technique does not work for me, it never has."

Okay. "And so therefore, I would prefer if you don't do it, because it doesn't work for me." Um, the provider didn't listen. They just did it anyways. Well, this is the one that I do, so-" Okay. "... you know, you'll be fine." And that's not listening to the patient. No. We learn a lot of different techniques in chiropractic school.

You're able to... There's more than one way to skin a cat. Sure. But they did not listen to that patient, so that patient then felt uncomfortable and felt like they're not heard, and now they're afraid that any other issues that they bring up- are you gonna be treated the same

So it's important to make sure that you're listening to the patient. It- listening is half the battle.

Listening is half the battle, you know, and then communicating effectively to them is another half. And then giving them clear, concise information. So even patients who come in who've been to a chiropractor before, when I'm doing an exam, I say, "Hey, I'm about to touch you here." "I'm about to move your body this way." Are you okay with that?"

I don't care, you been, you could've been going to a chiropractor for 99 years, I'm still going to ask those questions. Yeah. 'Cause I wanna make sure that you're comfortable with me putting my hands on you.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Yeah. Yeah, everybody's gotta be on the same page.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Everyone has to be on the same page. So as we increase diversity, right, as patients are seeing more doctors who resemble them- Mm-hmm ... they're gonna feel more comfortable going, and that's gonna increase patient going to a chiropractor. 'Cause if they feel like they're trusting the person who are, who they're seeing- then they'll tell their friends, they'll tell their family, they'll

bring their kids. And the population of patients seeing a chiropractor will increase- as the, the, the, the diversity in chiropractors increase- Yeah ... the population will increase as well.

Host Jon Kec, DC

So kinda on that same line, right, we, we see a very small percentage of the population right now. Very small. Um, do you know, happen to know offhand what percentage of either, um, uh, minority populations are currently seeing chiropractors, or if maybe not, what percentage of patients being seen by chiropractors are currently a, a minority group?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

The last number that I had w- were basically 2% of the 2%.

Host Jon Kec, DC:

Yeah. That, and that's a lot of people walking out of offices- Yes ... or never walking into offices- Right ... um, that we could be helping, so yeah. Yeah. Okay. Okay.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

So it's, the numbers, I mean, these numbers are small, which- the fact that- As a chiropractors we're seeing what? Roughly around 2 to 5% of the population. That num- that number is extremely small.

Which that number needs to be increased. Mm-hmm. And then the fact that the minority patients are even, like, within that s- it's, it's crazy.

There's so many people who we could effectively treat.

Host Jon Kec, DC

If they just got the chance.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

If they just got the chance. Yeah. And sometimes knowing that we're here and available, understanding what chiropractic is, is half the battle. Yeah. And a- a- again, it boils back down to communication.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Maybe in that same vein, we talked a little about health advocacy in the beginning, right? Um, as a, as a population, I think it's something we struggle with, right?

Man, woman, doesn't matter your ethnicity, doesn't matter your background. Mm-hmm. I think we have a, a health advocacy problem. Um, and I think it's kinda twofold, right? We, we as patients oftentimes don't advocate for ourselves. Mm-hmm. I think a lot of that is fear of being

heard- Mm-hmm ... or, or not heard. Mm-hmm. Um, but you know, just generally as a population, right, as we start to see more diversity and more people that, that look like us, common shared experiences, what do you think that effect on health advocacy would be? I, I think you kinda touched on it, like, seeing somebody that looks like you, thinks like...

thinks similarly to you potentially 'cause of shared past life experience, that's gonna allow you to be a little bit more open- which then allows you to be a little bit more advocates for yourself. Mm-hmm. Right? Um, but am I wrong? Am I off base on that?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke:

No, you are completely on, on... You're, like, hit the nail on the head When, when a patient comes in and they feel comfortable with you- because one of the reasons is whether it is because you look like them and they're like, "Okay, I can speak to this person because they understand the way I speak."

You know, 'cause some patients, you know, depending on their background, they speak, they speak a lot of slang, right? Yeah. They, you know, so when they see a doctor who, yes, the doctor's professional, but they understand the slang that they're speaking, they feel comfortable expressing themselves in the way that they express themselves- Yeah without feeling judged, number one.

And then they're able to... They'll tell you probably more things you wanna hear- ... about them and their personal lives. Yeah. You know? But they'll be really honest with you, you know? I had a patient, this was, like, last week, and he was like, "You know, Doc, I'm gonna be really honest with you. This discomfort that I'm feeling is really affecting my time with my wife."

I mean- I'm like, "Okay. Well, you know what? We gon- we gon help you out with that." Yeah. "We gon help you out with that, sir. We gon get this back right so- Yeah ... you don't have those problems anymore," you know?

Host Jon Kec, DC

But- It- it's a real problem Right ... like, it's, it's something that's impacting his life. It's affecting his-psychology. It, it's a thing. It's a thing. It's uncomfortable to talk about. Right. That's not fair. People feel like it can be uncomfortable- Right ... to talk about, but you can do it.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Exactly. It's, it's not hard. And he was like, you know, he was like, he's like, "I would've never... If I was uncomfortable, I would've never said that to you."

You know? And I was like, "Hey, we're here to make you feel better." Exactly. "We're here, here to increase your quality of life, and that's a part of your quality of life." And whatever we gotta do to get you there, we're gonna do it."

Host Jon Kec, DC

Well, I wanna pivot to kinda finish to the ABCA, but before I do that- anything else that we kinda haven't touched on that you wanna make sure that all the chiropractors listening, students, in

practice forever, you know, just starting practice, whatever it is, they hear that, that we need, that we as a profession need to understand about why we need to diversify, why we need to make sure that we are able to treat any and everybody, and how we best do that?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

We need to... Well, a couple of things. We need to increase diversity in chiropractic programs, right? But outside of that, of course, we need to increase the amount of doctors graduating. Like I said- we need to increase the amount of diverse doctors who are going into other areas of chiropractic, like research.

Going into other areas like education in the schools. When I was in school, there was only one black chiropractor there. Yeah. That was it, just one.

The whole school. And we all leaned on her with everything. Sure. You know what I mean? So we need to increase that. We need to increase the amount that is in the schools.

We need to increase the amount that are, that is in leadership. The amount that is having a voice in rooms where decisions are made. Because n- how can you make a decision when the voices that's being spoken is not a diverse voice? Cause your, the, the decisions that is being made will probably greatly be great impactful to some populations, but not every population.

But not, not others.

So it starts with enrollment, getting them into school. But it starts with retaining it throughout every area of the profession. And that's with being on the state boards. That's being a part of the national organizations. That's being a part of the state associations, all of that.

We need to have diversity across all facets of chiropractic.

Host Jon Kec, DC

I think that's a wonderful way to pivot into the ABCA. Um, so, you know, tell me and our listeners a little more about the ABCA. I, I've, I've never had the opportunity to attend any of y'all's events, but I've always heard awesome things, great show, y'all are super engaged. Um, but tell us about the organization, tell us about some of the initiatives going on and, and some of the stuff you see in the future.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Yeah, so first of all, you are always welcome to come.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Thank you.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

You know, the American Black Chiropractic Association was founded in 1981 by Dr. Bobby Westbrook. He is a Logan grad. Okay. And currently there is a bust of him on Logan's campus.

When Dr. Westbrook initially founded the organization, the, the purpose was to help integrate and improve outcomes for Black students going into the chiropractic program, because back in 1981, you could only imagine- Yeah

if we're talking about diversity now, you can imagine- Yep ... what it was back then.

So these students was in school, and they had no, no way to help them through the program.

You need, you need advocacy. That's how the organization was founded, right? As we're going into the future, we want to build on the legacy of Dr. Westbrook. So not only improving the outcomes for Black students in chiropractic schools, minority students in chiropractic schools, and doctors into the field- but expanding it. Okay. Where we're having diversity throughout the entire chiropractic profession. Where we're having education about diverse groups throughout the entire chiropractic pro- profession.

Where we're creating branding, where people understand, yes, the ABCA An organization that was founded one way, but it's not only for people who are Black.

This is for everyone, because chiropractic effects is for everyone. And we don't want it to seem like we're only serving one group of people. It's, uh, there's a lot of different minority groups- Yeah ... and we want to serve them all.

Host Jon Kec, DC

I, I think I heard at some point y'all have a women's advocacy arm as well, right? Women, women chiropractic, so. Or maybe not an advocacy arm, but you, you have almost like a subgroup that is women chiropractic focused. Am I, was I misinformed on that?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

We do have the WDC. And that's the Women Chiropractors. So we, we focus on everyone as a whole. We try to make sure that we're increasing diversity across all facets. We're trying to bridge the gap. We're trying to form partnerships with other chiropractic organizations so that they, they give, they, they understand the importance of partnering with diverse groups.

We want to build a legacy where anyone is able to come into chiropractic school so that in five to 10 years, in 10 years I don't want us to still be having a conversation about diversity. We should- Yeah ... be increasing in such a way and moving in such a way that it's like a natural part of life. It's the norm now. It is the norm. Yeah.

So the ABCA is an amazing organization. I've been a member since I was a student- At one of the student chapters. You know, we have roughly 15 to 20 chiropractic schools, and like the majority of them, at least 90% of them has a, have a student chapter on campus. Yeah. And we try to reach back down for those students and help them along the way.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

One of the things that we're doing, and anyone could, like I said, anyone could join SABCA. Um, anyone could be, could join the ABCA. We're not exclusive, we're completely inclusive.

And that's one thing I want everyone to know and understand.

We're for everyone. We're here for chiropractic, but we wanna make sure that you agree with one of our missions, which is making sure that minority students going through the chiropractic program is able to get through it, and you wanna help them along the journey. Because if chiropractic is diverse, it's only gonna be beneficial to everyone- To everybody practicing. Yeah. It's gonna be beneficial to our entire patient population that we're serving.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Well, where can people find out more about SABCA and the ABCA?

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

You can visit www.abcachiro.com. And you, we have so much information on our website about SACCA, about the ABCA, and some of the things that we have upcoming.

If you are a student watching this podcast, we are having a joint student leadership conference with the ACA- Okay ... in September. So it's a SACCA and SACCA collab, and it's gonna be at the Southern California University of Health Sciences- Okay ... the weekend of September 25th through the 27th. All right. So get with your local SACCA chapter or SACCA chapter and get signed up. It's gonna be an amazing time for the students.

Host Jon Kec, DC:

Well, I appreciate all the time today, all the conversation. Um, like, like I think we touched down with maybe your, your patient and his complaint. Um, this can sometimes be a, a bit of a sensitive and, and feel like an awkward topic- Uh-huh for people, and obviously you are n- you are never like that, so. Yes. Um, I appreciate all your, your transparency today- Of course ... and thank you so much for joining me.

Dr. Shereffa Clarke

Well, thank you so much for having me. Of course. It was a true pleasure.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Dr. Clarke, thank you again so much for joining us and for your time today, your insights, and your relentless leadership inside the profession. You've given us so much to think about, and more importantly, we've talked about some actionable steps today that we all can take, whether we're students, associates, or doctors in practice.

For our listeners who wanna support the work of the ABCA, get involved, and connect with Dr. Clarke directly, we've dropped all of her information as well as links and resources into today's show notes. If you found this episode at all helpful, be sure to subscribe and share this podcast with a colleague.

It'd be great if you could also leave us a review. It'll also help us... It'd be great if you could also leave us a review, as it'll help more chiropractors find us here at Chiropractic. Be sure to watch the video version of today's episode on the NCMIC YouTube channel. If you have any questions for me or the show, you can reach me at jkec@ncmic.com.

Thank you again for listening. I'm Jon Kec, and this has been Chiropractical.