

# THE CHIROPRACTIC CHOICE

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## MEDICARE CONFERENCE

*continued from page 1*

regardless of party. All speakers agreed that all beneficiaries in the system would be called upon to pay a greater share of the costs.

Where the Congressional speakers diverged was on the issue of privatization, with Republicans favoring the exploration of ways and means through which Medicare beneficiaries might help finance and administer their individual care through some combination of personal and government financial support, such as a Medicare Savings Account. Democrats seemed committed to preserving the social insurance nature of Medicare, while at the same time acknowledging that radical changes in methods were needed.

The keynote presentation at the Conference was made by The Hon. Barbara Kennelly, President and CEO of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, the nation's largest consumer grass-roots lobby group with nearly five million members. Speaking on "The Needs and Rights of Beneficiaries and the Prospects for Medicare's Future," Mrs. Kennelly spoke about the urgent need to seek sound solutions that secured the broadest possible access to benefits, on a financially sound and equitable basis, maintaining the uniform, national and publicly governed nature of the program.

Other presentations addressed such cutting edge topics as:

- The looming provider shortage and the challenges and opportunities for the chiropractic profession
- Who in Congress will decide the fate of Medicare?

## HISTORIC SUMMIT

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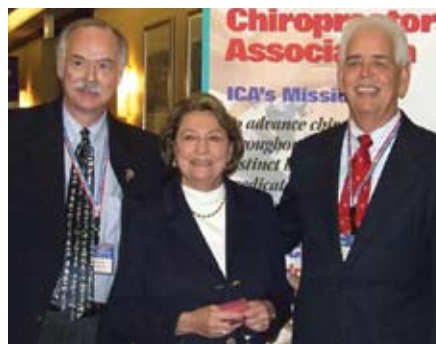
seeking to examine emerging threats and challenges facing the profession, establishing a list of priority issues and then examining possible action plans. By unanimous consent, the initial focus of the Summit discussion was on Medicare and the upcoming national debate on system-wide health reform.

In-depth presentations were made by the government relations staff of the ACA, the ICA and the ACC. All three organizations' presentations were in complete agreement on the intensity of the upcoming national health care debate and massive challenges chiropractic will be facing. These two closely related issues will require a new political mobilization of all segments of the profession, from students to practitioners, and above all patients and their families, to secure for chiropractic a rightful role in addressing the nation's health care challenges.

With the financial viability of the Medicare program in the daily news headlines and with soaring healthcare costs dominating the domestic political dialogue, there is little doubt that when a new Presidential Administration and a new Congress take office in January of 2009, national health and Medicare reform are going to be in the forefront of the nation's legislative agenda. In those



*Some of the attendees at the conference (L to R): Dr. Carl Cleveland, President, Cleveland Colleges; Dr. Michael McLean, ICA Chairman of the Board and Co-Chair, ICA Legislative Committee; Mr. Ron Hendrickson, ICA Deputy Executive Director and Government Affairs Director; Dr. Richard Plummer, Legislative Chair, FSCO; Dr. James Musick, ICA Western Regional Director and Co-Chair, ICA Legislative Committee; Dr. Jerry DeGrado, President, COCSA; Dr. Tom Taylor, ICA Assembly Rep., Arkansas; Richard Miller, ACA Legislative Consultant; Dr. John Maltby, ICA President and Dr. Joseph Brimhall, President, Western States College of Chiropractic.*



*Keynote speaker Ms. Barbara Kennelly, President of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, with Dr. Michael McLean (right), ICA Chairman of the Board and Co-Chair, ICA Legislative Committee and Mr. Ron Hendrickson, ICA Deputy Executive Director and Director of Government Affairs.*

debates, chiropractic must be prepared to defend and promote the unique contribution the profession can make, not only to the individual health and well-being of millions of citizens of all ages, but to the greater financial health of the nation's health care economy.

Summit participants took part in several rounds of breakout sessions in which designated groups sought to develop agreement on specific challenges and possible responses. Key concepts in that dialogue included how resources are to be marshaled, how the profession is to be kept informed and above all, how individual doctors, students, families and patients can be deployed in a new and unprecedented grass-roots political action campaign to press chiropractic concerns and initiatives with legislators and other key public policy makers. Going into great detail, the round-table segments identified more than one hundred issues and topics, and digested those concepts down into two dozen possible action issues. Key among those action issues were:

- Marshalling resources of all kinds, from money to unique and valuable skills,
- The establishment and effective deployment of doctor-patient-chiropractic supporter database that would deliver a powerful stream of messages to legislators on chiropractic's behalf,

- Mobilizing chiropractic's patient base
- The role of research in influencing public policy
- The "Opt out" issue and the possibilities of private contracting with medicare beneficiaries

Other presentations also addressed the expansion of chiropractic services to include coverage for those elements necessary to provide the highest quality service to Medicare beneficiaries, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) hostility and the unfair targeting of chiropractic providers for overly aggressive enforcement activities, the need to educate policy makers on the clinical and cost effective nature of chiropractic services, and the need to mobilize patients and their families to promote a much-deserved stronger role for chiropractic in caring for the nation's aging population.

"It is clear that there is a massive amount of work that needs to be done to secure chiropractic's rightful place in the Medicare program and in any national healthcare reform initiative," said ICA President Dr. John K. Maltby. "ICA recognizes that it will take an historic cooperative effort to achieve success, and ICA hopes that the Conference represents a first step along that path."

Numerous priority tasks were identified during the day's discussions and ICA hopes that a cooperative response can be undertaken to meet those needs. ICA is developing detailed summaries of all of the presentations at the April 24th Medicare Conference and will make that information available to the chiropractic profession through all means possible. Watch ICA's website at [www.chiropractic.org](http://www.chiropractic.org) for additional details.

- Mobilizing lobbying personnel, materials and a coordinated strategic lobbying plan,
- Generating a stream of positive media messages about chiropractic to better educate consumers and motivate policymakers,
- Build strong new alliances with other organizations, including allied health professions and consumer groups, especially senior citizens' organizations.

The action issue which all agreed was most urgent was the development and presentation of one message to the profession, the public, the media and ultimately to public policy decision-makers. "The Summit's activities are intended as a profession-wide initiative with no boundaries of individual philosophy, organizational membership or personal differenced," states Carl S. Cleveland III, DC, a member of the Summit Steering Committee and President of the Association of Chiropractic Colleges. "The profession may never have a greater opportunity for victory in influencing healthcare reform."

A central theme throughout the Summit discussions was the urgent need to reach and mobilize every individual doctor of chiropractic in the nation and for everyone who has a stake in chiropractic's future to assume a new sense