

**ITALY—RIGEL**

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the amendment out of the Budget Committee and got it accepted by the Senate.

To help coordinate and promote the passage of the amendment, the AIC organized an impromptu lobbying center in Rome that was directly linked to the AIC headquarters in Genoa so all the players could stay connected and respond in a timely fashion. In the Camera, the lower house of Italy's bi-cameral Parliament, the amendment became the target of an intense lobbying attack by the Italian Medical Association. The medics were supported by the Health Minister who was strongly opposed to chiropractic getting recognized as a primary contact health care profession. But AIC did not back off, it responded with its own lobbying efforts, including the bi-partisan support of several parliamentarians.

The credit for the success of this campaign however must go to Senator Lusi who was determined to seeing this amendment through. The Senator is a chiropractic patient and married to a member of AIC. His personal knowledge and belief in chiropractic were what motivated him. He explained the cost-effectiveness of chiropractic care to his colleagues in the House Budget Committee and convinced them that chiropractic was a good investment for Italy's health care system. He was tireless and relentless in his efforts.

We also owe a deep debt of gratitude to Deputy On. Manuela Di Centa from the opposition party, a former champion of cross country skiing and a chiropractic patient. Deputy Di Centa openly admitted that helping to get chiropractic recognized was her way of repaying the

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profession that had helped and prolonged her professional career.

The collaboration of the majority and the opposition proved to be a winning combination. It helped chiropractic to overcome the anti-chiropractic elements in Parliament and the strong and extensive medical lobby. It helped get chiropractic recognized.

Never before has the chiropractic profession been under so much duress as in the past two years. After a national survey showed that 9,000,000 Italians were utilizing alternative medicines, in 2002 the Italian Medical Association determined that chiropractic and eight other alternative health care professions were to be considered as "medicine" and therefore should be practiced only by members of their organization, i.e. medical doctors.

Their decision at first remained an internal house affair until their powerful medical lobby quickly moved to obtain their objectives. Criminal cases were filed against chiropractors for practicing medicine without a license. In these cases the Italian Supreme Court followed

the federation's guidelines by stating that everything a chiropractor did and does, according to Italian law, was to be considered an act of medicine. That verdict provoked a new wave of federal police investigations, arrest warrants and court trials. Never have so many chiropractors been under criminal investigation and accusations.

Imagine yourself as a subject of an unannounced blitz from a special squad of the Carabinieri police when all persons inside your office are required to identify themselves. Your patients are asked if they have been visited by you, for what conditions and if they have been subjected to treatment by you. Your files are inspected for evidence of medical terminology and diagnosis. Percussion hammers and x-ray view boxes are photographed and your adjusting table has suddenly turned into medical instrumentation. If it is determined that you are personifying a medical doctor, your files are confiscated, your patients are called to testify and you are arraigned to a court hearing. In the meantime, your office is locked and sealed as a preventive measure to the continuation of the crime.

Italy has the highest ratio of MDs to patients in the world; approximately 400,000 medical doctors and orthodontist in a population of less than 57,000,000. On the other hand there are less than 300 chiropractors, so we were definitely playing on an uneven field.

The victory for professional recognition did not come easily, but thanks to the perseverance and persistence of many, especially our wonderful supporters Senator Lusi and Deputy On. Di Centa, the door to Italy's nationalized health-care system is finally open to Doctors of Chiropractic. This is a historic landmark not only for chiropractors in Italy, but for chiropractic worldwide.

**AIC Celebrates Professional Recognition**

On January 19, 2008, members and supporters of the Associazione Italiana Chiropratici (AIC) gathered in Milan at the luxurious Four Seasons Hotel to celebrate their new chiropractic law.

Special guests of honor were: Senator Luigi Lusi, who was instrumental in pushing the chiropractic legislation through the Italian Parliament; David Chapman-Smith, LLB (Hons), Secretary General of the World Federation of Chiropractic; Philippe Druart, D.C., President of the European Chiropractors Union, and John Williams, D.C., President, Associazione Italiana Chiropratici.

Many past members also attended to give their thanks to the AIC and its members for a work well done. Almost all former members present declared their desire to rejoin the AIC and help support the association for the parliamentary discussions and commissions which will be very important in defining the specific regulations in Italy.

Attendees enjoyed seeing each other and sharing their memories, both good and bad during the turbulent years when they were struggling for recognition and under constant attack by the medical profession. The program included celebratory cocktails, a meeting of the members of the AIC, keynote speeches by the guests of honour, a brief film of an interview with Jolly Trentin, the 99-year-old widow of Italy's first chiropractor, Marcello Trentin and a wonderful dinner followed by music and dancing.



AIC members, non-members and special guests celebrate with a gala dinner at the Fours Seasons Hotel in Milan.



L to R: AIC Founding Member Dr. Jean-Pierre Meersseman; AIC President Dr. John Williams and Dr. Thomas Rigel.



Dr. Philippe Druart, President of the ECU (left) and honored guest Senator Luigi Lusi who was instrumental in pushing the chiropractic legislation through the Italian Parliament.



L to R: Dr. Thomas Rigel, AIC Founding Member and Coordinator of ICA's 2002 International Symposium in Rome; Dr. Antonio Gil, ICA Assembly Representative for Italy; and David Chapman Smith, Secretary General of the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC).



Dr. Manuel Manzinni (left), AIC National Committee Secretary, presents AIC President Dr. John Williams with an award "in profound gratitude for the tenacious determination and constant dedication towards the recognition of the Chiropractic profession in Italy."

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