

ICA Seeks Dialogue with Wal-Mart Regarding Chiropractic Benefits for Employees

The international Chiropractors Association has contacted Wal-Mart following this giant retailer's recent announcement to employees that effective January 2003 their health benefits program will no longer cover chiropractic care. ICA has written to Wal-Mart and asked for a meeting with senior managers to provide them with information about the cost-effectiveness of chiropractic care including its prevention and rapid recovery elements. Educating company managers of the benefits of chiropractic care and how it will help employees and the company is critical to reversing a decision that will affect thousands of Wal-Mart workers across the United States. According to ICA sources, chiropractic is the only major benefit that is being trimmed and that present expenditures for this benefit is a small fraction of the total benefits spending

by Wal-Mart.

In a letter to Mr. Ermick, Wal-Mart's vice president of benefits, ICA President Dr. D.D. Humber wrote:

"While we respect and appreciate your concerns for cost savings, we hope that you will consider examining a body of data that reveals on a compelling and well-founded basis, the economic wisdom as well as the employee satisfaction elements that are unique to chiropractic services. For decades, chiropractic has been the focus of cost-effective studies and outcomes research that has established a powerful record in both public and private insurance programs. We ask for the opportunity to review this information with you and/or your representatives in an effort to provide the greatest possible understanding on the part

of Wal-Mart decision-makers of the potential for cost savings by maintaining the present level of chiropractic benefits..."

ICA also encourages all DCS and their patients who are Wal-Mart employees to add their voice to what could and should be a nationwide call for re-evaluation of this decision by this Arkansas-based retailer.

"ICA believes that this is an issue on which thousands of voices will help get the chiropractic message through," said Dr. Humber. "While we recognize that the corporation has the full authority to take whatever steps it chooses, we hope that the power of positive persuasion and compelling arguments on behalf of maintaining the chiropractic benefits will bring about a reconsideration."

PRACTICE SUCCESS

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a police or fire department, businesses and industries, referrals from other professions, not just in health care but attorneys, sports-related sources, industrial concerns. Be the chiropractor that gets there first, seeking cooperative, mutually beneficial relationships.

■ **MEDIA:** How can you reach the most people with the greatest time and cost-effectiveness? The media is your first answer. Get your staff together and talk seriously about how you and your practice can harness this free resource. It will likely mean that you will have to organize events, conduct programs, engage in a new community service effort or the like, but the payoff in the contacts you will make from those efforts themselves, as well as the media coverage you generate, will be well worth it. Offer comment on timely health issues through the local media. Give the chiropractic perspective whenever and wherever possible on issues that are in the headlines in your community. Let the local media know that you are available to respond and comment on issues on which another perspective would be interesting.

■ **TECHNOLOGY:** Use your computer, the Internet and tech-based resources to compete and reach out. Create a website and use e-mail to communicate on an instantaneous, low cost basis. Do a health e-newsletter, or subscribe to one of the emerging new services that are specifically written to serve doctors of chiropractic. Establish an E-practice within your practice. Connect to the information age and go where the people are.

■ **GET HELP:** Always be aware of the circle of support that is available to you through the chiropractic professional organizations, management assistance groups, your friends and colleagues, staff, family and the Internet. Reach out — ask for help before your window of opportunity to be proactive closes.

The 12th century mystic, Rumi, said, "Whomever enters the way without a guide will take 100 years to travel a two-day journey." All successful people know that having a coach and a mentor dramatically increases their odds for success.

In closing allow me to share with you one of my favorite quotes from leadership expert, John C. Maxwell, who said, "Find something you like to do so much you'd gladly do it for nothing and then learn to do it so well that people will be happy to pay you for it." Take action now. Procrastination is the killer of dreams. Know that you were born to succeed.

Robert J. Hoffman, D.C. is ICA's immediate past president with 23 years of successful chiropractic experience. A 1978 graduate of New York Chiropractic College, Dr. Hoffman is currently president and CEO of The Masters Circle. Dr. Hoffman has been studying societal and market trends for many years and provides a quarterly clipping service documenting health care trends away from the allopathic drug model toward the wellness/chiropractic model of health care. Based in Lake Success, New York, Dr. Hoffman can be reached at 516-488-3200.

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