



Be prepared for PTs' Direct Access, "Manipulation" Legislation

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All health practice privileges in the United States stem from one source and one source only — the authorizing statutes passed by the various state legislatures. In this process, chiropractic has done a model job of applying consumer pressure and sound scientific and procedural arguments to carve out a unique position for the profession.

A separate and distinct practice and profession, chiropractic has stood strong and prospered under the mandates issued from the state legislative bodies. Over the past two years, the physical therapy profession has made the state legislative arena its major focus, introducing bills in state after state, seeking direct access status, new rights and privileges, many of which intrude directly into the core of chiropractic procedures, largely with no additional qualifications or education.

This dogged pursuit of doctor level

status has included some outlandish demands, such as a proposal in New Hampshire which would have vaulted the physical therapist into a doctor-level provider authorized to perform virtually all procedures of a doctor of chiropractic, as well as a long list of medical procedures, with little or no extra training.

Thanks to the wisdom, integrity and legislative skills of a few doctors of chiropractic, common sense of the New Hampshire legislature, and the help of the International Chiropractors Association, this proposal was resoundingly defeated. Still, this proposal was made with every expectation on the part of the PTs that it might pass.

This has been the case in state after state. An aggressive proposal is made and a major campaign waged for passage. Just because the proposals have been defeated so far do not mean that the PT's have given up the battle. Physical therapy organizations in those states have made a strong resolve and articu-

lated that they will come back and try again.

In January 2003, when the legislatures in most of the United States convene for new sessions, the battle most certainly will be rejoined in earnest. The physical therapy community will take what they learned, make changes in their plans, look to the new legislative allies they are working to build in the campaign process, address the arguments of their critics and competitors with greater skill and detail, and strike again at the heart of what was and is an unique preserve of the DC.

In this struggle, ICA will be there once again helping to research, write the papers and testimonies, and marshalling all the resources, strength and direction it can contribute, always in partnership with any state organization willing to take on the challenge. ICA has created a special state legislative task force to address the needs and requests for help from the states on this PT issue. This extra strength will certainly be needed because this time, we will be facing a far better organized and funded effort than in the last legislative cycle.

What should chiropractic do? The only thing it can do if we are going to survive intact is to resist with determination and reiterate as often and as directly as we can that the boundaries between all the professions must be very clear if the health care system is to function to the maximum benefit of the consumer.

The crux of the matter is that the aspiring PTs are looking for authority to perform tasks they have not had the education or training. In the case of spinal adjustments, this is compellingly clear. Likewise, on the diagnostic and analytical front, the DC's doctor level training must be the standard by which any such proposals are judged. The issue is protection of the public. On this same point, chiropractic efforts in the legislative process to extend into the realm of medicine and/or any other profession, regardless of the justifications some may put forward, undermines chiropractic's ability to protect its core in the legislative process. Indeed, it could be our very undoing.

In the weeks and months ahead, the chiropractic organizations and concerned groups of DCs in the states must take dramatic and immediate steps to:

- Study the current political landscape and make certain that in every key legislative race, a strong chiropractic presence is felt by the candidates you will need later in their capacity as a policy maker.
- Build personal bridges with legislative candidates at every possible turn, and make an effort to educate legislators through a personal experience with chiropractic. Get them to become your patient if they are not already under chiropractic care.
- Conduct a clear-headed study of the legislative pathways health professions legislation will follow in the state house and senate, and begin talks with the key committee leaders on what chiropractic is, what it needs and how you need their help to protect the public.
- Look for reliable and experienced counsel and start now to prepare the

programs, materials and arguments you can be certain you will need in the new legislative session.

- Start the process of organizing the grass roots capacity of your state chiropractic community and prepare in advance to bombard the state house with messages, written, electronic and in-person, on the legislative needs of chiropractic and our concerns over the proposals of other professions. Doctors and patients alike need to be part of this effort.
- Look for logical allies in the greater health care community and start talking now, well in advance of any legislative crisis.
- Marshall the necessary working groups and committees and assign the various tasks inherent in such a struggle well ahead of time.
- Be prepared to work with the chiropractic communities in other states and build on their efforts. PT initiatives across the nation were very similar and no state needs to start from scratch but can build on the successes and resources of other states.
- Remember that ICA is a ready and willing ally with resources and dedication that can be rapidly deployed to assist in defending the frontiers of chiropractic and in protecting the public from less-than fully skilled and trained health professionals.

In the legislative process, every voice counts, every vote counts and every political donation counts. Silence, inaction and non-participation means certain defeat. Let's keep the chiropractic profession in the position it deserves and has fought so hard to win. It is, however, a struggle that will never end, but we owe it to our patients as well as ourselves to be constantly vigilant and not to back off. In this struggle against the PTs, as in any other that affects chiropractic's future, ICA will always be there.

PALMER FLORIDA

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Palmer College University System President Dr. Guy Riekeman said that the college is offering a doctor of chiropractic program geared toward students who have already earned their bachelor's degree. The DC program will take 13 quarters to complete and will run year-round. The curriculum will stress chiropractic philosophy, basic sciences, clinical skills and practice management, exposing students to all aspects of patient care from day one.

"We're here to train students to go out and help people improve the quality of their lives," Riekeman said.

The first class has 46 students, the maximum number the college was prepared to admit at this time. The students come from 14 different states and include 29 men and 17 women ranging in age from 21 to 50.

The Palmer University System has two other colleges, Palmer Davenport in Iowa with 1,600 students, and Palmer-West in San Jose, Calif., with 400 students. It is expected that once the campus at City Center is opened, enrollment at the Florida college will be as high as 750.

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