



## Brazil: Battleground for the Future of Chiropractic

The chiropractic profession in the great nation of Brazil, the fifth largest country in the world with 190 million people, is engaged in an historic struggle to achieve official recognition for chiropractic through national legislation. The outcome should be of vital concern to every doctor of chiropractic in the world.

Legislation officially recognizing the practice of chiropractic as a doctor-level health profession is a universally important and vital goal for the chiropractic profession. It has certainly been a paramount goal of the International Chiropractors Association (ICA) since its founding more than 80 years ago. The challenges inherent in obtaining the legislation necessary to secure such a goal are always daunting, fraught with difficulty and often disappointment, conducted in the face of fierce, determined and well-funded opposition, and successful only when the greater chiropractic community pulls together, mobilizes all possible assets and resources, including patient power, and works until the goal is achieved.

The Brazilian Chiropractors' Association (ABQ) is in the midst of a determined and difficult campaign to secure the passage of a bill to recognize chiropractic in Brazil. The ABQ, with approximately 200 members, has a Chiropractic Bill before the 513-member national legislative assembly known as the Câmara dos Deputados (Chamber of Deputies), but has run into an equally determined effort by that nation's physical therapists to have chiropractic recognized by law as a specialty of physiotherapy. Apart from the legislative front, the government-approved council that licenses and regulates physical therapists, the Council of Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists (COFFITO), has ruled that chiropractic is a specialty of physiotherapy.

The efforts of the ABQ have also been greatly complicated by the emergence of programs organized by physical therapists to teach short courses, of 100 to 300 hours, for a certificate in chiropractic. This is possible because there is no law in effect in Brazil to protect the title of "chiropractor".

With great skill and professionalism the ABQ has mounted a broad-based campaign, utilizing both established lobbying tactics and innovative new ideas to educate legislators about the unique nature of chiropractic. Understanding the need to have a dedicated campaign leader present full-time in the national capital, the ABQ secured the services of Evergisto Lopes Souto, DC, a graduate of Feevale Central University in Novo Hamburgo.

Dr. Lopes has been coordinating the efforts of a 17-member commission of chiropractors, with one representative from each state in Brazil, meeting with legislators and their staff, meeting with

officials from the Work and Health Ministry and preparing and distributing materials about chiropractic, emphasizing the minimum educational standards and extensive training required to qualify as a doctor of chiropractic, and contrasting this demanding education with the short physical therapy courses that have been organized in the past two years to teach basic chiropractic principles to non-doctor level personnel.

The World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC), which has issued repeated

calls for international help on behalf of Brazil, in a recent report to member organizations highlighted a number of activities in this campaign, including:

- A highly successful 2 day public hearing on chiropractic before the Ministry of Health in late May
- Employment of leading marketing and campaign advisors in Brasilia since February — which is making a huge difference — this is the single greatest expense
- Current support from most political parties and the medical profession
- Recent renewal of Ministry of Education accreditation of Brazil's two chiropractic schools — for the maximum period of 3 years and despite strong PT opposition
- Administration of a multi-faceted campaign by an ABQ Legislative Commission led by Past President Dr. Sira Borges
- Funding of chiropractic services to underprivileged populations in key electoral districts

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