



# COMMENTARY

## Global Growth and Responsibility

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There has been a considerable amount of press within the profession recently addressing the concept of individuals undertaking educational or clinical activities in locales around the world where chiropractic is unregulated or regulated on a limited basis. These discussions quickly become very emotional because the emphasis of the discussions moves from the actions involved to consideration of the motives of the individuals.

As the council member from North America representing the International Chiropractors Association (ICA) to the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC), and as president of the WFC, it has fallen to me to address some of these matters in a quasi-public fashion. ICA has provided this opportunity to bring the actions of concern back into focus, and to hopefully leave the personalities out of the conversation — for at least the moment!

The profession is rapidly expanding around the globe. This expansion is occurring in environments where the profession is fully integrated into the infrastructure of a respective nation that includes licensure (or registration as it is known throughout most of the world), fully developed educational standards and participation in national health insurance scenarios. This expansion also includes environments where there is no recognition whatsoever, no licensure or regulation, no educational standards and no third party reimbursement for care and as a result no prohibition on the practice of chiropractic by anyone. Interfacing with each of these environments is very tricky, and can quickly become troublesome on levels that

were not initially contemplated by an individual or group.

Through the efforts of the WFC, the chiropractic profession has chosen to support an approach that respects and appreciates the importance of a consistent standard of education and training for the development of the profession around the globe. The framework of the thinking behind this approach has been articulated in what has come to be known as the Tokyo Charter, an agreement regarding the development of the profession that seeks the standard of education and training found in the United States or Canada for the rest of the world, while also respecting the need for incremental development based on cultural and political realities.

A key feature of the Tokyo Charter is an expectation of respect for chiropractors who live and work in an unregulated country by persons and organizations from outside that country. The Charter asserts that it is inappropriate for persons to attempt to teach in these environments without first seeking the support and cooperation of the local chiropractic community. These concepts are rooted in the perspective that local representatives of the profession are in a far better position to understand and appreciate the nuances of life in that country.

We are all quite aware that whenever there are two or more chiropractors present in a jurisdiction there is potential for two associations to also be present! While this comment is offered in a light-hearted sense, it is also reflective of an important reality. As the profession develops in any area, some people will seek to be included in the development and others will not, and some people will be purposely excluded

from the development while others are not. In the unregulated environment, these kinds of internal differences can create a reality that is ripe for side-choosing, finger-pointing and chaos in general. When we add outside influences, no matter how well intended, the potential for problems grows even larger.

It is a fact of life that differences on a professional level exist everywhere. There is rarely agreement by all parties that a given action or approach is the one to be taken. In the WFC's world problems exist in competing educational approaches and attitudes in the United Kingdom that has a well developed infrastructure. Problems exist in Sweden with the local educational community, the national association and government. In Germany government doesn't appear to be in the picture in light of the absence of any chiropractic legislation and differences exist within

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the practicing community of the country about the best method to proceed for government to recognize the profession. Each of these situations is unique and each plays itself out in a different manner.

A goal of the WFC is to work to see these matters resolve in a manner that supports the concepts of the professional design outlined above. Persons who have a strong entrepreneurial business sense, individuals and groups with a specific clinical emphasis, educational institutions and even religious groups can be unintentionally caught up in the

machination of circumstances such as these. In this situation, one's motivation is not the deciding factor about the appropriateness of an effort. The motives can be pure, and the end result can still be disastrous.

An example of how misguided efforts can become can be found in the circumstances of nations that function under the influence of British common law and those that function under the influence of Napoleonic law. Under British common law concepts, a given act is considered legal until deemed to be illegal, and under Napoleonic law, the same act is considered illegal until deemed legal. Take a step back and consider how one must approach matters of professional regulation in each of these environments!

Like the ICA, the WFC fully supports the expansion of the chiropractic profession on a universal basis. Every person in every nation should have the opportunity to receive chiropractic care. There is no disagreement on this level. There is also no disagreement that chiropractic should be advanced around the globe as a discipline and as a field of study, rather than as a technique or procedure.

The WFC and the ICA oppose the perspective that chiropractic can be subdivided and allowed to develop around the world as a series of professions or practices that might have something in common rather than having a consistent core of concepts that help to shape the emergence of the profession everywhere. This is in contrast to the approach taken by the osteopathic profession around the world. In that environment all persons who identify themselves as osteopaths are welcome and they will sort out differences in education, practice range etc down the road.

An example of how this choice plays out can be found in the *Guidelines for Basic Safety and Training in Chiropractic*, developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). When these guidelines were first proposed, the WHO suggested that it would be appropriate for a medical physician to obtain an additional 200 hours of study to qualify as a chiropractor. Through great effort by the WFC, the educational standard advocated by the WFC prevailed, and now the document states that for a physician to qualify as a chiropractor any place in the world, he or she must meet the same requirements as a medical doctor graduating from the University of California at San Francisco who then desires to qualify as a chiropractor in California by graduating from Life Chiropractic College West. This achievement by the profession, especially in light of where the discussions began, is perhaps one of the most important accomplishments in the history of the WFC. Our desire for a consistent educational and training standard, as opposed to a dictated curricular content, was recognized and adopted by the WHO.

Imagine being a chiropractor who has completed a D.C. degree, who has completed the National Board sequence and who has decided to be a pioneer in practice in an otherwise unregulated area. Unquestionably, a series of challenges faces such a chiropractor. Now imagine another chiropractor comes in from another country, and

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