

Health Insights Today

A SERVICE OF CLEVELAND CHIROPRACTIC COLLEGE

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EDITOR'S LOG

Why Chiropractic Matters

By Daniel Redwood, DC

With major health reform legislation now moving through Congress, this issue of *Health Insights Today* reflects the urgency of the moment, while also providing several reminders about the fundamental meaning and purpose of chiropractic. No profession is free of self-interest, but special interest pleadings in most cases will not (and should not) carry the day. Instead, it's crucial at this time – for all chiropractors, chiropractic students and patients seeking the most positive outcome for chiropractic in health reform – to remember why chiropractic matters, so that all of our lobbying efforts include this core message of healing and thus become far more than a self-serving effort to preserve or expand our piece of the economic pie.

Read our interview with Dr. Lewis Bazakos, chair of the Chiropractic Summit, to understand the current state of play and legislative strategy. But also be sure to read Senator Sam Brownback's story about how Congress' chiropractor cleared his month-long neck pain with a single adjustment, allowing him to throw away the prescription for medication that he had just received from Congress' medical physician. Don't miss (near the end of the Brownback article) the moving testimony of injured Iraq war veteran and soon-to-be chiropractic student Todd Steinbrecher, as he passionately describes how the chiropractic services now available from the Veterans Administration health system restored him to the fullness of life. Take in the powerful story of the dozens of Italian chiropractors who left their offices to provide urgently needed care (for free) to the fire fighters and Red Cross staff responding to the devastating earthquake that rocked Italy in April.

Take it all in. Let it circulate through your consciousness and infuse you with hope, meaning and purpose. Remember that *this valuable service to humanity*, not personal or professional self-interest, is the reason that Congress and the executive branch should include chiropractic as an essential health service in any reform that emerges. This is not just spin or strategy – it is the true heart of the matter. Think about it. When you speak to others (friends, family, patients, or legislators) about including chiropractic in health reform, make *this* the center of the discussion. It is the main reason that chiropractic has survived and increasingly thrived for more than a century despite sustained opposition from defenders of the medical status quo.

As you spread the word, also be certain to mention the extensive scientific research that has demonstrated the effectiveness of spinal manipulation and chiropractic care (particularly for low back and headaches) at a level equal to or greater than any competing method of any kind. This is why a U.S. Agency for Health Care Policy and Research panel concluded in 1994 that spinal manipulation (94% of which is delivered by chiropractors) was one of only two doctor-delivered treatments for low back pain supported by research, and the only one that both relieved pain and restored function. It is why spinal manipulation is included in many nations' current guidelines for low back pain, including the 2007 low back guidelines jointly endorsed by the American Pain Society and American College of Physicians.

As we prepare this issue of *Health Insights Today* for launch, no one knows whether a health reform bill will pass or what a final version might include. If a bill passes, there is a reasonable likelihood that it will include both major challenges and major opportunities for chiropractors. Without wishing to minimize the very real dangers we face, I want to highlight one of the possible opportunities.

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A central aspect of President Obama's proposed health reforms is the revival and expansion of comparative effectiveness evaluations, possibly coordinated by a new agency specifically charged with this mission. *Chiropractors should enthusiastically support legitimately designed comparative effectiveness policies* for two reasons. First, precious health care dollars are best spent on care that is effective and cost-effective. No fair-minded person can argue against this. Second, and of particular significance for chiropractors, properly constructed effectiveness-driven policy with the power to directly or indirectly create new standards of care, can potentially provide the means through which chiropractic takes its next giant step toward full recognition as a respected and integral part of the health care system. Remember, out of several dozen controlled trials on spinal manipulation, the majority have shown it to outperform other approaches and virtually none have shown it to perform more poorly than a comparison approach. Old patterns of prejudice and discrimination die slowly, but their demise can be speeded by facts and transparency.

These are exciting times. Don't just sit on the sidelines. Help create the future you seek.

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