

Thank You, ACA!

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Thirty years ago, I was one of the staunchest supporters of the American Chiropractic Association. One of our early professional journals used to print a list of the doctors who had referred doctors to be ACA members. My name appeared in the number-three spot on several occasions, just behind two legends in the profession, Drs. Joseph Janse and James Parker.

Following President Richard Nixon's historic trip to the People's Republic of China in 1972, there was an unprecedented interest in acupuncture. My chiropractic practice, and those of many of my colleagues, grew to include acupuncture as a vital part of our practices. Unfortunately, many practitioners, including myself, became quite disenchanted with the ACA's apparent lack of interest in this extremely popular healing modality. Even as thousands of DCs began to form an interest in acupuncture, and postgraduate programs were being offered by at least five chiropractic colleges (the earliest beginning in 1972), the ACA would take no official position on acupuncture.

Numerous attempts to establish a council on acupuncture met with deaf ears, even though there were hundreds of doctors who wanted the ACA to establish a council, as it had done with nutrition, physiotherapy, and would do with sports injuries.

Reluctantly, I felt compelled to drop my ACA membership, as it did not reflect what I felt was the dynamic future of chiropractic. On multiple occasions over the 15 years following acupuncture's introduction into the U.S., I would alert the ACA that there were more acupuncture colleges in just three states than there were chiropractic colleges in the world. I felt it was imperative that the ACA adopt a national acupuncture policy, but, again, it was met with deaf ears.

As acupuncture grew to include national certification and the formation of several professional organizations, there was also a growing distaste in some quarters for doctors of chiropractic practicing acupuncture, although DCs had utilized acupuncture since its inception in this country. The ACA continued to ignore acupuncture, even though an estimated 25 percent of the profession had taken postgraduate work in acupuncture, and were routinely using its principles in their practices.

Numerous state boards have been forced to take a position on acupuncture; more than half allow DCs to practice it as part of their scope of practice. All states require additional training and certification through the postgraduate departments of the nine chiropractic colleges teaching acupuncture and meridian therapy. I can't help but wonder about the states that do not allow acupuncture. Would they have accepted its use if the ACA had endorsed acupuncture?

For close to 30 years now, I have sat on the sidelines watching this profession develop through the undying efforts of incredibly dedicated individuals who run our largest national association. The sacrifices they have made to ensure the growth and place this profession has achieved legislatively is humbling, to say the least. Though I have not been a part of the ACA for over a quarter century, other than for the acupuncture issue, it has always had my utmost respect.

The ACA has solicited my membership in a variety of ways over the years. Only a few weeks ago, a

letter came across my desk from ACA President Darryl Wills,DC. He made the best case for belonging to the ACA I had ever heard. He pointed out that the national associations representing physical therapy, osteopathy and medicine (and a host of others who continually fight our every move) are huge compared to our comparatively tiny association. The amount of finances available to them is frightening. I realized how much we have accomplished as a profession in the wake of gigantic, organized overwhelming opposition. To make matters worse, we even have the acupuncture associations attacking us on every front in matters of legislation. Frankly, I wonder how we have survived! If it had not been for the few driven doctors who represent us, I'm afraid this profession would have been history years ago.

Dr. Wills' letter was brilliant. To take a person like me, who has purposely boycotted the ACA for all of these years, and make me want to roll up my sleeves and belong, may be one of the toughest sells in the country. If the ACA and Dr. Wills can change my mind and make me want to belong, I can hardly imagine what this leadership can do on the legislative level, as we face some of our biggest challenges. After reading Dr. Wills' letter, I told my office manager to write a check for \$600 to the ACA. I figured that for less than two dollars a day, it was well worth it!

It's absolutely amazing how the universe works. The following day, I received an email from the ACA Council on Physiological Therapeutics and Rehabilitation, inviting me to participate in a special conference to be held during its annual board of governors meeting. The topic of discussion was the formation of an ACA-sponsored and endorsed college of acupuncture under the umbrella of that council, chaired by Dr. Kim Christensen. Although I was not yet a member of the ACA, I was specifically invited to participate in this historic conference, along with the postgraduate departments of the chiropractic colleges. I attended, representing myself and the postgraduate department of New York Chiropractic College.

Also in attendance were Dr. Richard Yennie, representing Texas Chiropractic College; Drs. Jon and Joy Sunderlage of the National University of Health Sciences; Dr. Ralph Barrale, chairman of the postgraduate department of Logan College; and Dr. Lawrence Beem, of Cleveland Chiropractic College-Kansas City.

While at the governors' meeting, I hand-delivered my annual ACA membership to President Wills, with heartfelt thanks on behalf of myself and thousands of DCs for adopting acupuncture into the scope of the chiropractic profession.

I've rededicated myself to the successful launch of this "college of acupuncture" within the shortest possible time. It seems a gargantuan undertaking; however, it pales in comparison to what the doctors at the legislative level deal with on a daily basis.

Thanks again, ACA. Acupuncture within the chiropractic profession is about to enter an entirely new dimension. Wait until you hear about what is developing concerning national certification in acupuncture for the chiropractic profession!

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