

Our Bullet-Riddled Feet

James Winterstein, DC, President, National University of Health Sciences

It has only been a month or two since I wrote to this publication in relationship to an occurrence in which the International Chiropractors Association (ICA) interfered with the plans of the chiropractic profession in Nebraska - and now it has happened again.

I received the *ICA News Brief* and was disappointed and disenchanted at reading the following:

"Thanks to the aggressive lobbying by the ICA and its allies, the Health Committee of the Rhode Island House of Representatives, at its session of March 22, resoundingly rejected a proposal that would have expanded the chiropractic scope of practice in that state to include acupuncture. This proposal would have allowed DCs to take a minimal amount of education and qualify under their chiropractic license to perform this procedure. The ICA teamed up with the acupuncture community and public interest groups to prevent the back-door addition of this authority to the scope of chiropractic practice because clear pathways to acupuncture licensure have already been provided for in Rhode Island state law..."

According to Dr. David Lenkewicz, this was a legislative effort by the Rhode Island Department of Health (DOH) to give its director, Patricia Nolan, MD, MPH, the authority to establish rules and regulations by the Rhode Island Board of Chiropractic Medicine for the practice of acupuncture by chiropractic physicians within the scope of their licenses.

This DOH effort resulted from a meeting of officers of the Chiropractic Society of Rhode Island with Nolan and her executive staff. The proposed solution was drafted by her and the legal staff, and would have placed the Rhode Island chiropractic physicians at parity with the MDs and DOs.

This was an initiative by the leading chiropractic organization in the state of Rhode Island, and the ICA chose to interfere with the hard work, the desires and the intentions of its chiropractors in a state legislative effort. Here again, as in Nebraska, we have chiropractors shooting the feet of other chiropractors! Bang! Bang! "Ha, Ha, we got you!" they cry. What an unsavory circumstance this is. It is bad enough that we have to fight with our health care competitors, but it is far worse when our own brothers and sisters team up with the competitors to fight us. What makes it more dyspeptic is that the ICA is proud of its actions that undermined its own colleagues.

It is ironic that the chiropractic profession has been primarily responsible for the introduction of meridian therapy acupuncture into the United States. In 1970, the National University of Health Sciences (NUHS - then the National College of Chiropractic) began a clinical study of acupuncture procedures and continued this effort for two years, after which it began to teach this form of health care to chiropractors who wished to learn it. The New York Chiropractic College was also teaching it; since then, Logan has, as well. I am sure other chiropractic colleges teach acupuncture to chiropractic doctors also, as this is a useful and valid addition to our form of practice. (*Editor's note: The Southern California University of Health Sciences, formerly LACC, offers a program in acupuncture and Oriental medicine.*) This recognition and education, however, is apparently not acceptable to the ICA, for reasons it never clarifies. They are just against it, so - bang!

There was a similar and inappropriate incident by appointed representatives of the ICA. On March 30, 2001, a visit by key legislative staffers and a policy-maker from the Department of Veterans Affairs was scheduled to occur here at the NUHS. This visit was requested by the staffers from the House Veterans Affairs Committee and was arranged by Dave Obryon, executive director for the Association of Chiropractic Colleges, in connection with Jay Witter from the American Chiropractic Association. As a gesture of collegiality, they invited the ICA to send a representative.

The visit was scheduled on very short notice, but at National, where we are used to this kind of thing, we prepared to receive the guests on March 30. The ICA sent a representative, but that apparently was not enough, because, two other ICA representatives showed up uninvited and inserted themselves into the meeting, without so much as a "by your leave."

The VA was here to learn more about chiropractic education, research, and service, and we were well prepared to provide that information. We did so with careful attention to the recognition of the varying aspects of chiropractic practice; from those who choose to practice the "location and adjustment of vertebral subluxation" to those who practice in a more broad-scope setting. The information was well received, but as we began to tour the facilities, it became obvious that our ICA colleagues took every opportunity to corner one or more of our visitors and attempt to "indoctrinate" them in the concepts of "straight chiropractic." We heard the following comments, among others:

"The real diagnosis is vertebral subluxation."

"The thing that really counts is the vertebral subluxation."

"The thing that makes us different is the actual correction of vertebral subluxation by specific chiropractic adjustment."

"Why wasn't this visit scheduled at Palmer College?"

To top it off, the ICA representative brought public relations material, including catalogues from Palmer College, and handed it out to the visitors. The whole thing had a distinct flavor of intraprofessional dissonance - and it did not go unnoticed on our visitors. Bang! Shot in the feet again! However, I can truthfully say that National in no way made statements or took positions that would diminish the practice of limited-scope chiropractic.

In the end, as I sat with the visitors alone, the allopathic policymaker from the VA said: "I have one major question: How does the VA work with the members of your profession obviously have such distinctly different concepts of health, disease and health care, as some of these people have?"

My only rational response at that time was to say, "I see no alternative but to require credentialing of all DCs who might potentially participate in the VA programs."

What, I wonder, does the ICA believe it accomplished by these actions, other than to prove twice again that the chiropractic profession is a divided profession and as such, the ability for outside organizations to work with chiropractic is hampered, diminished or even completely impossible. To this, I suspect the ICA will say, "so that the chiropractic profession can remain separate and distinct." How visionary! The trouble is that I don't think they know how to spell "distinct." I suspect it is more likely to be spelled "extinct," and all over the wishes and desires of a small minority of people within our group. Bang!

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