

Michigan Chiropractic Council Brings Halt to National Board Part IV Testing

In early 1999, Dr. James Sommers, chairman of the Michigan Board of Chiropractic Examiners and vice president of the Michigan Chiropractic Society (MCS), introduced proposed changes to Michigan's chiropractic licensure regulations that would require parts III and IV of the National Boards for a Michigan license. The Michigan Chiropractic Council (MCC), recognizing the negative financial burden this would place on chiropractic students (and the incongruity of the content of part IV with the scope of practice in Michigan), took immediate action to stop the initiative.

During June 1999, there was a public hearing on the licensure issue. In a massive show of opposition to the proposed changes, an unprecedented number of people attended the hearing to challenge the rule change. Thirty-seven people spoke against the inclusion of the NBCE Parts III and IV, including written testimony from the presidents of the ICA and FSCO. Six people spoke in support of the changes. Those who spoke in support of expanded testing tried to make the argument that the extra test would improve the quality of the chiropractors in Michigan. One doctor referred to Michigan chiropractors as being "the bottom of the barrel" because we do not require as many board exams as other states. Those opposing the testing made it clear that more chiropractic education improves the quality of doctors, but testing that is highly medically-oriented in no way improves the quality of a chiropractor or the service they provide. In an article published in the November/December issue of the Michigan Chiropractic Council's *Communique*, Dr. Kerry Kilpatrick stated that, while it's presumed that more testing will create better doctors, this is not proven to be true. "In reality, if you compare the states that require all the proposed testing with those that do not by analyzing their rates of malpractice, the incidence of malpractice or any other actuarial parameter, no benefit can be shown factually." Dr. Kilpatrick added: "A doctor that is 'bottom of the barrel' will not be able to pass the strict requirements that are presently in force in Michigan."

One particular DC, apparently unhappy with Michigan's chiropractic climate, felt that increased testing would expand the scope of practice. The doctor stated that "any monkey can adjust." He hoped the extra board exams would open the door to expansion of Michigan's chiropractic scope of practice, which would allow him to be more professional.

Dr. Tim Tarry, former president of the Michigan Board of Chiropractic Examiners, stated that he would like to see the money that would be required to pay for Part IV used to educate chiropractors and help keep them informed. "In 100 years of chiropractic, we haven't needed a National Board Part IV," Dr. Tarry asserted. "Testing doesn't make better doctors; education does. We should add education to make sure that current doctors are keeping up with the latest information."

Dr. Tarry said that the present licensure requirements make chiropractic service in Michigan extremely safe for the public. Chiropractic malpractice insurance is extremely low for a reason. "My insurance is only \$800 a year. My next-door neighbor, an osteopath, pays \$48,000 a year. There is virtually no health risk or danger to the public with the licensure requirements we presently have in place." Through the coordinated efforts of Dr. Tarry, MCC lobbyist Steve Scofes,

and the testimony and letters of thousands of DCs, the proposal for the addition of NBCE's Part IV was soundly defeated. Part III has been conditionally accepted, with an appeal process that would make the board more relevant for Michigan doctors. The National Board of Chiropractic Examiners and their willing accomplices in Michigan have come under massive increased national scrutiny because of the excessive direct and indirect costs associated with their tests; their archaic testing methods, which greatly delay a doctor getting into practice; and the misuse of the millions of dollars of profit that are made from the test they are attempting to mandate for all segments of the chiropractic population. The MCC proudly fought against the incremental expansion of testing for Michigan doctors and won a decisive victory.

The battle is not over yet!

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