

Managed Care Reform Will Pass ... **BUT WHAT ABOUT CHIROPRACTIC?**

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Spending a few days in Washington, D.C., can reveal a great deal about what is in the minds and hearts of our congressional representatives. Time and again they talked about the abuses of the managed care industry and the tragic experiences of their constituents. They have not only heard the stories, but some have personal experiences.

So the question of whether managed care reform will occur is not really the issue. Chances are quite good that we will see some form of managed care reform this year before the elections.

But when the heat is on Congress to formulate a managed care reform bill at the 12th hour, what will happen to the interests of our patients and our profession?

Will patients have the ability to select their own health care provider even if that provider is outside the network?

Will chiropractic be included, or will the benefits of the law belong to "physicians"?

The amount of money riding on this issue is staggering. This isn't a case of bias against chiropractic particularly. The managed care companies will seek to close the door on any "additional" expenses, most noticeably alternative care.

The Patient Access to Responsible Care Act (PARCA) that has been pushed by the American Chiropractic Association (ACA) has made impressive progress. When Newt Gingrich insisted on 200 co-sponsors before he would let the bill on to the House floor, he probably felt confident that the support level would not reach those heights.

But the public response was clear, and PARCA easily reached 200 co-sponsors, and continues to gain support (currently 226 co-sponsors out of 435 members).

Now other managed care bills are being introduced; some of them are similar to PARCA, but others are not nearly as comprehensive.

The biggest issues for chiropractic patients are the ability to see a chiropractor and the ability of every person to have access to a health care plan with a point of service (POS) option. The passage of these two elements in whatever managed care reform bill is finally signed into law will allow your patients to come see you, regardless of what kinds of plans their employers offer.

Through the efforts of a coalition of organizations led by the ACA, PARCA is headed for the House floor. The debate will rage long and hard. A bill will ultimately be passed and matched with the results of a similar process in the Senate.

The content of the bill is what is in question. The decision of whether chiropractic patients will gain or lose access to you has yet to be debated.

It has been a long time since a bill that would impact your practice has reached the floor of the House. With over 60,000 DCs in the nation, caring for an estimated 25 million patients, it would seem that we could bury our congressional representatives and senators with e-mail, mail, faxes and phone calls.

You have one voice, your patients have many.

This is the time to ask your patients to sign form letters, send e-mail or even make phone calls from your waiting room. Let your patients call your senators and representative to let them know that they want PARCA to pass with point of service for chiropractic care. The cost of the call to leave this message is minimal. The impact is huge.

To find your representative's address, phone number and e-mail address, go to the website [[url=http://www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org)]<http://www.vote-smart.org>[/url]. For information about PARCA, sample patient letters and a list of targeted legislators, go to the ACA's website ([[url=http://www.amerchiro.org](http://www.amerchiro.org)]<http://www.amerchiro.org>[/url]), or contact the ACA at (800) 986-4636.

This is the time for the final push. Over the next few months the fate of millions of chiropractic patients will be decided by a group of non-chiropractors. Without a voice within Congress, we are forced to speak loudly outside. The more voices we get to join ours, the better chance we'll have of being heard.

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