

## After 16-Year Struggle, Chiropractic Gets Its Own Section in American Public Health Assoc.

Editorial Staff

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Michael Perillo, DC, MPH: "With this comes the responsibility for the profession to continue and expand its role in conducting public health research and educational programs, as well as formulating relevant public health policies."

SAN DIEGO, Calif. -- This sunny port city, the site of Junipero Serra's first California mission, made history of another kind November 1, 1995. After a valiant campaign that lasted 16 and one-half years, the full Governing Council of the American Public Health Association (APHA) voted here by an overwhelming majority to establish a "Chiropractic Health Care" section. Chiropractic joins 24 other sections as a full-fledged partner, having parity with all the other disciplines for the first time in APHA's 123 year history.

"I'm proud and privileged to have been able to lead this cause," said Chiropractic Section Membership Chair Dr. Rand Baird. "Many unsung heroes worked with me on various aspects and behind the scenes. Chiropractic leaders, field doctors, and hundreds of students share this historical victory with me. Now that we are full partners in public health, we must continue to participate."

APHA is the oldest, largest, and most influential public health association in the world. From 1969-1982 it had an official anti-chiropractic policy. In 1983, after a four-year effort, another team led by Dr. Rand Baird convinced APHA to adopt a new superseding policy that recognized chiropractic as safe and effective for certain neuromusculoskeletal conditions, especially low back disorders.

Since that time, chiropractors have participated in many APHA activities, particularly at the annual meeting, held in a different city each fall and attended by over 12,000 registrants, including most of the top leaders in federal, state, local, and international public health. It is the largest public health gathering in the world. This year there were over 125 display booths in the Exhibit Hall, and

the chiropractic profession can be proud that the American Chiropractic Association, Cleveland Chiropractic College, and the Association of Chiropractic Colleges each had their own booth. The almost 900 educational sessions with over 2,500 scientific and technical presentations included four sessions devoted to chiropractic topics: some 20 outstanding papers by 57 co-authors were presented to the multidisciplinary audience.

As previously reported in *Dynamic Chiropractic* in January and July 1995, a dedicated team of chiropractic's most knowledgeable experts had worked countless hours all year to prepare the section application and its supporting documentation. The profession owes a debt of gratitude, in particular, to a number of leaders for their foresight and vision:

*Rand Baird, DC, MPH,*

*Fred Colley, MPH, PhD*

*Mitchell Haas, DC, MA*

*William Meeker, DC, MPH*

*Robert Mootz, DC, DABCO*

*Michael Perillo, DC, MPH*

In San Diego, Dr. Mitchell Haas, chairman of the Chiropractic Forum: Special Primary Interest Group, and member of APHA's Governing Council, formally presented the chiropractic's application and some introductory remarks.

"Working on the section application was quite a challenge," said Dr. Michael Perillo. "After literature searches, drafts, faxes, phone conversations, and countless re-writes, the working group was able to craft an application which appropriately portrayed the public health relevance of chiropractic health care."

Dr. Rand Baird, acting as a planner and strategist, coordinated and lobbying and advised the team. Other chiropractic leaders and notables, too many to name here, played important supportive roles. Two college presidents (Drs. William Dallas and Reed Phillips) were present, and many faculty from several of our colleges.

When the Governing Council began the debate, several other well-known leaders in the scientific community spoke out for chiropractic:

- William Kirk, PhD, radiation physicist, testified to chiropractors' expertise in radiation protection of the public.
- Victor W. Sidell, MD, a highly regarded former president of APHA and internationally acclaimed physician, spoke about our dedication and our contributions.
- Letters of support were received by the Governing Council from Dennis Murphy, PhD, chair of the Radiological Health Section, and from Helen Rodriguez-Trias, MD, another recent APHA past president.
- Professor Jon Lemke, PhD, from the Statistics Section, spoke about chiropractic research and praised Palmer College's research department.
- Ted Miller, PhD, from the Injury Control and Emergency Health Services Section, eloquently

described the high quality of chiropractic care for low back pain and other injuries, for valid data documenting our efficacy, quoted the AHCPR guidelines and other studies, and praised chiropractic colleges and ACA and ICA for their track record in maintaining agency membership in APHA.

Minimal opposition was raised to the chiropractic section application, mostly in the form of concerns about chiropractic support of proven public health practices, such as immunization and water fluoridation. Concern was also raised that a chiropractic section should focus on rallying chiropractors' support for public health preventative programs: the need to monitor fringe practitioners and unscientific procedures was also mentioned.

Dr. Haas expertly answered these concerns, and Dr. Baird ended the debate by calling for fair play, equal membership rights, and nondiscrimination against chiropractic, pointing out to the Governing Council that the section application was in good order and that the chiropractic members were in substantial compliance with the required criteria for becoming a full section.

After the successful vote, several APHA leaders congratulated the chiropractors for the fine job they had done. APHA's Executive Director Fernando Trevino, PhD, MPH, and Caswell Evans Jr., DDS, MPH, president of APHA, both extended warm congratulations and wishes for a future of working together within the public health establishment towards common goals.

"I would like to thank my colleagues who worked so hard with me in preparing our section application and all those members of the chiropractic community who laid the groundwork through their active participation in APHA over the last 20 years," said Mitchell Haas, DC, MA. "I am confident that our section status will be a springboard for an increasing role for chiropractic in APHA and in the community health across the country."

Fred Colley, PhD, MPH, extolled the new Chiropractic Section, and expressed a desire for the profession to emphasize participation: "The Chiropractic Forum has demonstrated its professionalism through its scientific programs and the participation of its members in all aspects of APHA. Furthermore, chiropractic has clearly demonstrated its strategic role in public health as evidenced by its impact on reducing national health care expenditure, its involvement in community health, and its participation in research and government agencies," he said. "Section status provides chiropractors with an excellent platform for exchange of information with other health care professionals. My hope is that chiropractic colleges and professional organizations will encourage their students and associates to join and maintain membership in APHA. Chiropractic members of APHA now have an unprecedented opportunity to establish their rightful place as advocates for community health and to influence national health care policy in the years to come."

"A decade has passed since I attended the first scientific paper sessions sponsored by the chiropractic special interest group," said Dr. William Meeker, reflecting on how long it has taken the chiropractic profession to finally obtain its own section in APHA. "At that time, 1985, there were not just a few in APHA who did not know what the letters 'DC' stood for. Now there is no doubt. Those chiropractors who have joined and remained members of APHA over the years certainly deserve our thanks and gratitude. Now it is time for all chiropractors to join this, the oldest and one of the largest health care organizations in the United States, so that we may continue to demonstrate the commitment of chiropractic to the public's health; and to affect through sound policymaking those issues which will impact the chiropractic role in the evolving health delivery system."

Dr. Robert Mootz praised the efforts of the doctors who have struggled for chiropractic's inclusion in APHA, but cautioned that the struggle is not yet over: "Those of us in the Chiropractic Forum

have worked long and hard to achieve this. We can be justifiably proud of this achievement. However, as with all victories, the really hard work begins now. Chiropractors need to become more involved. Our colleges need to encourage faculty memberships, and our providers need to get more involved through joining and attending the APHA programs. Chiropractic is truly coming of age!"

Dr. Michael Perillo pointed to the profession's "responsibility to continue and expand its role in public health research, educational programs, and formulating public health policies."

It's fitting that in our centennial year the chiropractic profession has demonstrated its support of the scientific principles and practices of public health, and in turn has been welcomed as a full section status in APHA. Dynamic Chiropractic has heralded these efforts since they began in 1979 and promoted membership drives and will continue to do so. All chiropractic doctors, students, and educators are urged to join and/or renew APHA membership. For further membership information, contact:

Rand Baird, DC, membership chair (310) 373-2225, or call APHA Membership Department (202) 789-5600.

Editor's note: The first call for abstracts to be presented in the Chiropractic Health Care Section at the November 1996 APHA Conference will come out this month. For more information, contact program co-chairs:

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