

Health Care Reform: Where Are We Now?

A LETTER TO YOU FROM CONGRESSMAN GARY ACKERMAN

Editorial Staff

The entire chiropractic profession is naturally concerned about where we now stand in the confusing, evolving process called health care reform. Congressman Gary Ackerman (D-NY) has been kind enough to give you his understanding of how chiropractic is currently positioned:

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To the Editor:

I am writing to inform your readership that I have strongly supported the inclusion of chiropractic care in all the health care reform proposals currently being considered in Congress.

The basic benefits package which forms the core of many of the health care reform proposals is the same as that which is currently available to Americans covered by Medicare. Since chiropractic care is presently covered by Medicare, it would continue to be covered by Medicare, and would be included in the basic benefits package available to all Americans.

In addition, the major reform proposals expand the current Medicare provisions to include x-ray services necessary to chiropractic care. Once the Medicare provisions are amended, the coverage provided will become part of the basic benefits package available to all Americans. Those Americans who will be covered by the new Medicare Part C will also have access to the chiropractic services outlined above.

Under reform the state would be given broad discretion to create the kind of health care system that best meets the needs and desires of their citizens, provided the state system meets the national goals of universal coverage and cost containment. Those states which have already undertaken to reform their health care systems may continue with those reforms. The competition, or employer mandates will be able to do so.

I will continue to support the inclusion of chiropractic care as part of the basic benefits package in the impending health care reform legislation.

Sincerely,

Gary L. Ackerman
Member of Congress

As you can see, Medicare is the template for the basic benefits package in most legislation. For chiropractic to improve its position in health care reform, it must improve its Medicare coverage.

Many doubt whether health care reform will ever be significantly affected by Congress. With the intense lobbying, the high degree of complexity and the overwhelming unpopularity of the costs involved, some don't expect Congress to do any more than make minor modifications to the existing law.

But the profession must be prepared to speak with one voice should Congress move towards passing major legislation. If given a choice, one bill will be preferable to others, and certain language will be critical to chiropractic inclusion and reimbursement.

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