

Federal Funding for Chiropractic Research Sought

Editorial Staff

An ad hoc advisory panel of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) met June 16-17 to hear testimony from "alternative" health care professionals. Among the professions that sent representatives to testify before the NIH's panel on "Unconventional Medical Practices" were chiropractic, osteopathy, homeopathy, naturopathy, and acupuncture.

The reason for the panel was a \$2 million budget increase legislated by Congress to establish an Office for the Study of Unconventional Medical Practices.

Stephen Seater, executive director of the Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research (FCER), presented the panel with the current studies on chiropractic, including the RAND Corporation's findings that there is more scientific evidence supporting manipulation for low-back pain than any other treatment.

After presenting the research material to the panel, Mr. Seater spoke of the abundance of anecdotal evidence of chiropractic's efficacy for such conditions as hypertension, PMS, asthma, enuresis et al. "Based on what clinical research has already elucidated about chiropractic's effectiveness," Mr. Seater said, "it seems reasonable to request that NIH devote some of its financial resources and expertise to investigate how chiropractic may help in the treatment of these and other somatovisceral conditions."

Mr. Seater asked not only for NIH funding for chiropractic research, but for grants for doctoral and postdoctoral studies, and appointments of chiropractic researchers to NIH peer review panels.

The consensus of the panel was that NIH needs to extend its research training to include alternative practice researchers, to help integrate conventional NIH researchers with alternative practice researchers. The panel agreed that the alternative practice researchers need assistance in developing protocols for testing their methodologies. The panel noted the absence of forums for field practitioners to present their findings to the scientific community.

Dr. Seater reports that no consensus was reached on integrating alternative practice peer review into the existing research model, an important component in bringing objectivity to NIH funded research.

While the advisory panel met to discuss "Unconventional Medical Practices," the panel members concurred that "unconventional" should be replaced by a more appropriate designation.

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