

## Celebration and Despair

Christine Tamulaitis

Arizona chiropractors have reason for both celebration and despair.

The cause for celebration is the state's recent passage of an Unfair Claims Practice Act, signed by Governor Rose Mofford on July 3, 1990 (see related story, "Arizona Passes Insurance Law," in the August 1, 1990 issue of Dynamic Chiropractic. The landmark legislation will, by state statute, prohibit insurance companies from denying claims for appropriate chiropractic treatment if it is a covered service under the terms of the policy.

The cause for despair is the continued existence of the Arizona Chiropractic Alliance (AzCA), an organization founded just over a year ago and run by Drs. Alan Immerman and Terry Rondberg, two vocal and disgruntled former members of the Chiropractic Association of Arizona.

Just two weeks ago, merger of AzCA with the Chiropractic Association of Arizona (CAA), the association that has represented Arizona's chiropractors' interest for 15 years appeared imminent.

The merger proposal was up for a vote by the CAA membership at its annual convention in Tucson, July 5-7. The proposal was developed following months of joint meetings between the two associations, often with the assistance of a paid, professional mediator.

There were many facets to the merger agreement: most notably, one that required a change in the CAA bylaws to clearly state CAA's desire to have the SCASA philosophy more comfortably represented, and second, a stipulation that specific individuals who were involved in the controversy between the two associations -- inclusive of leaders of both AzCA and CAA -- be restricted for two years from holding the position of president of the proposed merged association.

One week before the merger proposal was scheduled for a vote -- in the midst of celebrating the legislative victory -- Dr. Immerman, AzCA's self-appointed president, reneged his position favoring merger, and called for members of the profession to reject the proposal.

"We have spent time, money, and energy trying to work with Drs. Immerman and Rondberg," said Dr. Robert E. Dahl, CAA president. "We have bent over backward to secure an agreement because we truly believe it is in the interest of the profession to have one association representing the profession."

"We have held back from criticizing AzCA's motives and methods and we have worked alongside them because we were cognizant of the tenuous nature of the work needed for success in the state legislature," Dahl said. "We were united in that effort, and by doing so, we accomplished what we set out to do."

Dahl also said that the CAA can no longer allow the communication machine that Drs. Immerman and Rondberg operate to lay claim to the successes achieved in Arizona and to perpetuate a gross distortion of facts.

Dahl cited the AzCA Newsletter, and Dr. Rondberg's nationally-distributed Chiropractic Journal as

vehicles for their own fabricated perception of the truth.

"No one achieves legislative success without years of groundwork," said CAA lobbyist, Joe Abate. "In my 15 years as a lobbyist, this was the most difficult bill to get passed, not necessarily due to the bill's controversy, but because of the faction of voices outside the CAA that we had to monitor."

A major hurdle of the bill was an agreement made by Immerman and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Arizona that changed the language of the bill, and stripped it of any effectiveness.

"This agreement was made without the knowledge of any of the parties sponsoring the bill," Dahl said. "The language Immerman approved, completely destroyed the effectiveness of the legislation."

Fortunately, the damage was repaired by further amendments, and only after numerous discussions between the legislators, lobbyists, and leaders of both associations.

"We are prepared for AzCA to once again try to take all the credit for another chiropractic success in Arizona," said Dr. Dahl. "We expect that of them."

Dahl cited CAA's list of legislative accomplishments over the past 15 years, an updated scope of practice law, an Insurance Equality Law, and two successive sunset reviews of the Insurance Equality Law, among others.

"However, the light is on the horizon," Dahl said. "From speaking with doctors in the field, we see that the Chiropractic Association of Arizona is getting its message across."

Furthermore, Dahl said that former members and board members of AzCA are rejoining the CAA and now publicly criticize AzCA for the dictatorial and self-serving nature of AzCA leaders, Immerman and Rondberg.

"We are, at last, seeing the tide change its course," he said. "We will continue to work with AzCA on legislative matters, but we refuse to be engaged in activities that lack good faith and integrity, while they are out recruiting membership based on half-truths and innuendos."

"It is not our desire to launch a similar negative campaign against them as they continue to do against the CAA," Dahl said. "It is not the nature of the Chiropractic Association of Arizona to sink to that level."

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