

## AMA Develops Patient Bill Of Rights

Editorial Staff

In what amounted to almost a complete reversal, the AMA approved a patient bill of rights. The document is entitled "Fundamental Elements of the Patient-Physician Relationship"; and includes statements that every chiropractor and their patients should be aware of.

The bill of rights document contains an introduction and six statements. The first statement expresses the right of the patient to receive information. The second statement discusses the patient's right to make decisions. The third and fourth statements refer to the right to courtesy and confidentiality.

But it is the fifth statement that is probably the most important for the chiropractic profession and the care of our patients:

"THE PHYSICIAN HAS AN OBLIGATION TO COOPERATE IN THE COORDINATION OF MEDICALLY INDICATED CARE WITH OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS TREATING THE PATIENT."

Quite obviously, this is a concept that the chiropractic profession has been trying to beat into the heads of the arrogant AMA establishment for some time. The inclusion of this type of language in the first AMA patient bill of rights is not only promising, but puts them on record.

The sixth (and last) statement discusses the patient's basic right to available adequate health care.

Unfortunately, this presents the chiropractic profession in the United States with a problem:

WHERE IS CHIROPRACTIC'S PATIENT BILL OF RIGHTS?!?

At the AMA's 1989 Interim Board meeting last December, they refused to approve a patient bill of rights. By their refusal, they incurred the wrath of both the consumer rights groups and the national media (please see "AMA Should OK Good Prescription"; Dynamic Chiropractic, February 14, 1990, page three).

At this point, the chiropractic profession had the opportunity to take the lead in the eyes of the patients. We failed.

The ICA and the ACA did begin to address the issue, but the wheels of progress move much too slowly. The ICA did in fact develop their own "Chiropractic Patient Bill Of Rights"; as Emergency Resolution #13. The ACA has yet to get this far.

But this is not an issue where the profession can afford the luxury of division. The Chiropractic Patient Bill Of Rights for the entire profession in the United States must be forged and approved by BOTH national associations.

Now we have to play "catch-up"; and we must do it quickly. You may need to encourage these two associations to act in a more expedient manner to accomplish this need. It would be very painful to

the reputation of the chiropractic profession to be found wanting in the area of patient rights.

Every chiropractor should have a copy of the AMA's patient bill of rights. It's very easy to get. Just call the AMA headquarters (312) 645-5000 and ask for a copy of it (They sent one to ";DC,"; surely they will send one to you.) If you like, they will even fax it to you.

A copy of this document will obviously be invaluable as you assist your patients in receiving the best possible care.

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