

Golfing With C.J.

James Edwards, DC

A few weeks ago, my good friend Dr. C. J. Mertz was kind enough to invite me to play golf with him on his home course at Barton Creek Country Club in Austin, Texas (where we both live). Although we had a wonderful afternoon (he is a very solid player and beat me soundly after I three-putted 10 greens), talking about our golf match is not the purpose of this "Insider's Insight" column.

The purpose is to give you a little insider's insight about what the current ICA president and the immediate past ACA chairman discussed during the round. Like Augusta National members, we were true gentlemen and discussed no business - that is, until the 12th tee box. From there on in, we covered every imaginable chiropractic subject - including, but not limited to, VA direct access, inaccurate media stories, inflammatory e-mails, mandatory immunization and numerous other issues on which our two organizations totally agree.

However, our most important discussion occurred in the parking lot as we were leaving, when I told him that I knew the four most important issues to the ICA, and then quickly listed them, as follows:

- Chiropractic is and should remain a "separate and distinct" health care discipline.
- Correction of subluxations is the core of chiropractic.
- There is no place in chiropractic for drugs or surgery.
- The terms "chiropractic adjustment" (instead of spinal manipulation) and "subluxation" (instead of joint dysfunction) should be utilized when talking to legislators, policy-makers and the public.

After I rattled off that laundry list, C.J. said with a bit of surprise, "That's right, those are our primary concerns." I then told Dr. Mertz that I also knew many ICA leaders felt that if they merged with the ACA, they could be outvoted and those important tenets might be "watered down" or even lost. He again agreed.

And here is where it got really interesting. I told C.J. that if the ICA and ACA were willing to engage in merger discussions, I was willing to fight to ensure that those four principles were "front and center" in the new organization's charter, bylaws and/or constitution. Furthermore, I would fight to include a provision that if any of those tenets were to be altered, an 80 percent ratification vote of the membership would be required. In other words - and for all practical purposes - those four major tenets would be outside the scope of authority of the leadership, and thus would essentially become unchangeable. To be candid, I believe the ICA president was quite surprised by my proposal.

As treasurer and district VI governor, can I guarantee that the 75 members of the ACA House of Delegates (HOD) will approve of those four tenets and in effect, make them non-negotiable items for perpetuity? Of course not! However, I can tell you this: The vast majority of the members of the HOD are subluxation-centered chiropractors who strongly believe in those principles. For that reason, I believe they would be willing to merge with the ICA and protect those core principles that are so very important to it - and the ACA.

But here is what I can guarantee! I will absolutely commit to this proposal and will use every ounce of my influence and every political chit I have to incorporate those four tenets into the founding documents of the merged organization, along with an "ironclad" provision that they cannot be amended without an overwhelming ratification vote of the entire membership.

Although some ACA members might not be completely happy with those "chiseled in stone" positions, there is no question that they represent the "mainstream" thought of this profession. Even without 100 percent ACA unanimity, it is more important to focus on the greater good. And the greater good is that a merger on that basis would finally allow the profession to start speaking with one strong voice and stop the needless duplication of services.

The bottom line is this: If the ICA has really and truly feared merging with the ACA because it felt certain core values might be lost - this proposal provides absolute protection against that ever happening. With those concerns addressed and protected, it is time to set aside egos and political agendas; and it is time for the ACA and ICA to merge! As an individual DC, what can you do? *Demand it!*

(*Author's note:* The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions, policies or positions of the American Chiropractic Association.)

James Edwards, DC
Treasurer and District VI Governor
American Chiropractic Association
Austin, Texas
jamesedwards@jamesedwards.com

MAY 2004