

We've Come a Long Way Together

Donald Krippendorf, DC

The celebration of *Dynamic Chiropractic's* 500th issue provides a unique opportunity to reflect upon the advancements our profession has enjoyed - and the vital role the American Chiropractic Association (ACA) has played in those advancements - over the past 20 years.

Since its inception, the ACA has dedicated its efforts to protecting the rights of all doctors of chiropractic and their patients. Whether fighting for chiropractic on Capitol Hill, representing the chiropractic profession in the press, or negotiating with insurers, the ACA never forgets that the chiropractic profession is a diverse one whose members deserve professional representation that is both credible and formidable. Implementing this inclusive approach, we have set out to create new opportunities for the profession, to increase patient access to chiropractic, and to raise awareness of the essential services doctors of chiropractic provide.

With the goal of increased patient access to chiropractic in mind, the ACA and its energetic members have enjoyed a recent series of historic legislative victories on behalf of chiropractic, including the establishment of a permanent chiropractic benefit for America's military personnel; the establishment of a permanent chiropractic benefit for our nation's veterans; inclusion of doctors of chiropractic in the National Health Service Corps student loan reimbursement program, and expanded access to chiropractic under Medicare. After working closely with the ACA on a bill that seeks to ensure unimpeded access to chiropractic in the veterans health care system, Congressman Bob Filner of California aptly referred to the ACA as "the voice of chiropractic." With this success has come recognition from an official with the American Political Science Association, who, in the November 26, 2003 issue of the *Washington Times*, listed ACA among the 25 most effective grassroots lobbying organizations for health care in the United States. To put these advancements into an historical context, the chiropractic profession had not enjoyed a significant legislative victory prior to these since the 1970s, with the passage of the limited chiropractic Medicare benefit.

But there is more to ensuring patient access and protecting the rights of our doctors than simply enacting legislation. As the 1980s came to a close, health care providers of all types began to feel the sting of managed care, as this style of health maintenance became a reality. Recognizing the pitfalls of this often-frustrating health care environment, the ACA delivers the concerns of doctors of chiropractic over unfair treatment directly to the highest levels of the insurance community. And in addition to communicating with insurance companies every day, the ACA hosts two conferences each year with the policymakers of such major insurance groups as Allstate, Aetna, Cigna, AAA, Met Life and Blue Cross/Blue Shield, as well as the policymakers of the major chiropractic networks. Through these conferences, the ACA fights for fair treatment of all doctors of chiropractic, and against scare tactics, intimidation and burdens that are often associated with the reimbursement process.

Another critical component to establishing credibility for the profession and patient demand for chiropractic has been improving chiropractic's relationship with the media. While there is much work still to be done, reporters have never valued the opinions of doctors of chiropractic on health and wellness issues as much as they do today. Twenty years ago, the only time chiropractic was

written about or discussed in the media was to expose cases of fraud and other unpleasant issues. Reporters didn't even bother to contact any chiropractic association for comments before running with their negative stories. Conversely, however, reporters now often come to the ACA first to seek experts on a variety of health, safety and wellness-related subjects. Since August of 2003 alone, the ACA has represented the profession positively in such media outlets as National Public Radio, *U.S. News & World Report*, the *Detroit News*, the *Washington Post*, and *Woman's World*, among many others, as well as on more than 500 prominent radio stations across the country.

The ACA pledges to continue to fight in every arena for our beloved profession and the patients we serve. And with the support of our dedicated members, we plan to make the next 20 years even better than the past 20.

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