

Dept. of Defense Chiropractic Advisory Committee Restored

On Oct. 28, 2004, President Bush signed House Resolution (HR) 4200 into law.* Among several other provisions, the resolution reactivates the Department of Defense (DoD) Chiropractic Health Care Benefits Advisory Committee, a panel responsible for providing the Secretary of Defense with "advice and recommendations regarding the continued development and implementation of an effective program of chiropractic health care benefits for members of the uniformed services on active duty."

A decade ago, the DoD's first chiropractic oversight advisory committee was established to evaluate the Chiropractic Health Care Demonstration Program (CHCDP) under the 1995 National Defense Authorization Act, which implemented and evaluated chiropractic benefits at 10 military treatment facilities over a period of five years. The committee disbanded shortly after submitting its report to the Secretary of Defense. Some in the chiropractic profession believe pressure from organized medicine may have played a role in the committee's demise.

As the CHCDP drew to a close, lobbyists working on behalf of, among others, the American Chiropractic Association (ACA) and the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC), successfully passed legislation in October 2001 that required the DoD to permanently phase-in chiropractic services at military treatment facilities over a five-year period. Currently, 42 facilities offer chiropractic to active-duty personnel.

The new advisory committee, reinstated under section 718 of HR 4200, will be responsible for evaluating and documenting the progress of the current chiropractic program, and making recommendations, as necessary. Leaders in the chiropractic profession are hopeful that any recommendations the advisory committee makes will include program expansion, as well as providing chiropractic care to military personnel stationed overseas; currently, chiropractic is only available in military treatment facilities stateside.

"Congress is once again telling the Pentagon to move faster to provide the chiropractic care America's troops want, need and deserve," said ACC Executive Director David O'Bryon, commenting on the signed resolution.

American Chiropractic Association President Donald J. Krippendorf, DC, is also enthusiastic. "This is a great victory for the troops because Congress has placed their health care needs first. As a U.S. Navy veteran and concerned citizen, I want to see America's military have access to the best health care that can be provided, including chiropractic care."

Under the stipulations of HR 4200, the advisory committee will consist of "no fewer than three practicing representatives of the chiropractic health care profession" and at least one "representative of each of the uniformed services." At the start of the fiscal year 2005, the committee must meet at least three times for the purpose of evaluating and ensuring the implementation of an appropriate program that provides chiropractic health care benefits to active military personnel.

Once the evaluation is completed, the committee will submit a report to the Secretary of Defense, who will, in turn, submit a report to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The secretary's report will include a copy of the advisory committee's report; comments from the secretary about the committee's report; an explanation of the criteria used to ensure a chiropractic program was fully implemented; and the secretary's views regarding the future of the program.

- <http://Thomas.loc.gov>.

Resources

1. House Resolution 4200, excerpted from National Defense Authorization Act for the Fiscal Year 2005.
2. Press release. "Congress tells the Pentagon: chiropractic panel is on 'active duty' again. American Chiropractic Association. Oct. 15, 2004.
3. Phone interview with Richard Miller, ACA lobbyist. Nov. 23, 2004.
4. Congress passes historic chiropractic legislation. *Dynamic Chiropractic*. Nov. 15, 2000.

JANUARY 2005