

## Outrage in Ontario: Physiotherapy Delisting Reversed

CHIROPRACTIC REMAINS EXCLUDED FROM PROVINCIAL HEALTH PLAN

Karen Stretch, assistant editor

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- Dr. Dean Wright, president, Ontario Chiropractic Association

In October 2004, the provincial government of Ontario, Canada announced that chiropractic services would be "delisted" from the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). Along with chiropractic, physiotherapy and optometry benefits were also cut from the plan, in an effort to balance the province's budget. During a May 2004 press conference, Ontario Finance Minister Greg Sorbara had called chiropractic one of the "less critical" services and claimed that the cuts would save more than \$200 million over the next two years.

The Ontario Chiropractic Association (OCA) and others reacted immediately to the announcement. The OCA led a massive protest of the government's decision, and Canadian chiropractic patients wrote over 600,000 letters and signed petitions trying to convince the government to continue funding for chiropractic services. Dr. Pran Manga, a professor of economics at the University of Ottawa in Ontario and author of the well-known "Manga Reports" of the 1990s, was one of the most vocal critics of the decision to delist chiropractic. Dr. Manga warned that the cuts to chiropractic would not save money, and would actually cost the government more money in the long run.

Despite these and other efforts, the delisting took effect in December 2004, bringing an end to more than 30 years of public funding for chiropractic services in Ontario. The official government stance was that budget issues made it impossible to continue funding chiropractic, and that patients treated by other health care professionals were experiencing the same thing.

But apparently, patients wishing to visit a physiotherapist for care are not "experiencing the same thing," at least not since March 24, 2005. On that date, the provincial government announced an expansion in funding for physiotherapy services - a service originally slated to be delisted on March 31, 2005.

In response to the shocking announcement, Dr. Dean Wright, president of the OCA, called on Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty "to do the right thing and treat chiropractic patients in an equitable manner as with those patients treated by other health care professionals."

"The 1.2 million chiropractic patients in this province were led to believe that they were among a number of patients - physiotherapy and optometry patients included - for whom government could no longer afford to provide funding," said Dr. Wright. "Now they are learning that the government has chosen to treat them fundamentally differently than patients seen by other health care professionals."

According to Dr. Wright, government action to protect chiropractic patients - as has now been done for physiotherapy patients - would reduce reliance on other services and reduce total health care costs. Indeed, a 1993 study funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health found that OHIP coverage of chiropractic care could save Canada's health care system approximately \$380 million per year in direct costs, and an additional \$1.2 billion per year in indirect costs due to short- and long-term disability.

#### *Resources*

1. Ontario removes chiropractic from provincial health plan. *Dynamic Chiropractic*, July 1, 2004: [www.chiroweb.com/archives/22/14/06.html](http://www.chiroweb.com/archives/22/14/06.html).
2. Dr. Pran Manga assails Ontario's decision to delist chiropractic. *Dynamic Chiropractic*, July 15, 2004: [www.chiroweb.com/archives/22/15/07.html](http://www.chiroweb.com/archives/22/15/07.html).
3. Delisting of chiropractic in Ontario takes effect; massive protest effort fails to reverse government's decision. *Dynamic Chiropractic*, Jan. 15, 2005: [www.chiroweb.com/archives/23/02/09.html](http://www.chiroweb.com/archives/23/02/09.html).
4. Government reverses physiotherapy delisting. Ontario Chiropractic Association press release, March 24, 2005.

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MAY 2005