

Yes to Cooperation, No to Merger

ICA PRESIDENT JOHN MALTBY, DC, CLARIFIES THE ASSOCIATION'S POSITION ON NATIONAL UNITY. WHERE DOES THE PROFESSION GO FROM HERE?

Editorial Staff

While the merger resolution passed by the Congress of Chiropractic State Associations (COCSA) may not be bringing the American Chiropractic Association (ACA) and the International Chiropractors Association (ICA) any closer to merger, the resolution surely has accomplished at least one thing: dialogue within the profession, particularly between the ACA and ICA. As reported previously in *DC*, the COCSA merger demand, passed on March 10, urged the two national associations "to begin immediate action toward merger with a target completion date of January 1, 2010." Two weeks later, the ACA House of Delegates passed a statement of willingness to explore the possibility of merger. The ACA's Board of Governors reiterated that statement in early May, concluding that "ACA continues to stand ready and willing to begin merger discussions with ICA leaders ... that will hopefully lead to a stronger and more powerful chiropractic profession."

The official ICA response to the COCSA resolution on unity, approved at the ICA's 81st Annual Meeting (April 27-28), stated, in part, "[W]e can appreciate the desire to further the profession of chiropractic. ICA shares these desires but does not agree on the course of action being proposed. ICA continues to pledge cooperative effort in those areas where a common voice can speak on issues. However, on those issues where a separate voice is needed, ICA will continue to express that voice."

Even ACA President Richard Brassard, DC, and ICA President John Maltby, DC, traded correspondence on the merger issue. In Dr. Brassard's May 2 letter, he stated: "I believe that the differences between ACA and ICA have been exaggerated over the years, while the similarities have been understated. ... I believe we can build the foundation of sincere and earnest discussion about ways to address the threats and opportunities facing our profession."

Recently, *DC* received a copy of Dr. Maltby's June 22 response to Dr. Brassard. In that letter, Dr. Maltby reiterated that merger is "not on the table, nor do we believe it is in the best interests of either organization," but offered ways he believes the two associations can work together for the benefit of the profession. Specifically, Dr. Maltby proposed "an initial list of possible joint initiatives as a starting point for united action, not in response to or in any effort to placate calls for merger ... but to better serve the profession."

- "ICA recommends that one or more joint sessions of our respective legislative committees be convened by telephone conference call. The proposed agenda for these sessions might be the establishment of a general federal legislative protocol whereby the two associations might share future plans and initiatives, seek agreement on a policy of non-interference for initiatives on which we do not wish to cooperate, and the establishment of a short list of agreed public policy goals addressing such urgent legislative frontiers as Medicare, TRICARE and student loan reform.
- "ICA respects and appreciates the initiative displayed in facilitating the introduction of HR 1470 and HR 1471. ICA would gladly join in a profession-wide campaign to promote the passage of these bills, starting with a joint statement between our two associations calling

for such an effort.

- "ICA has secured a commitment from two appropriately placed Members of the U.S. House of Representatives to introduce a 'Sense of Congress' resolution on the matter of military commissions for doctors of chiropractic. ICA would like to explore the joint introduction and promotion of this initiative.
- "For the past few years, the number of practicing doctors of chiropractic in the United States has been well above the 50,000 mark. At that level, the profession had reached and has been able to maintain the kind of critical mass needed to succeed as a profession. Now, we are confronting a situation in which the actual numbers of practicing doctors of chiropractic in the U.S. are declining. ... In recognition of this situation, ICA proposes that ICA and ACA join together in developing and conducting a nationwide student recruitment effort through a campaign centered on a 'Chiropractic Career Month.' Such an effort would not only help address the enrollment situation faced by most U.S. chiropractic colleges, [but also] would give the chiropractic profession a platform to promote the powerful and positive features that make chiropractic unique among doctor level healing professions."

And in an August interview with *DC*, Dr. Maltby clarified the ICA's position on the issue of national merger:

Dynamic Chiropractic (DC): Do you believe any of the ICA members are interested in merger? If not, why not?

John Maltby (JM): I cannot speak for each individual member in the ICA; however, the Representative Assembly and the Board of Directors, elected by the membership, have unanimously rejected the merger proposal.

DC: Is the ICA willing to discuss merger with the ACA or COCSA?

JM: No.

DC: There are those who believe the chiropractic profession is hamstrung politically by having more than one organization representing the profession. How do you react to that concern?

JM: I don't believe the profession is hamstrung politically. A cooperative effort, as demonstrated by the Chiropractic Coalition, has demonstrated the ability of different chiropractic associations [to work] together for the profession. The ACA has an open invitation to participate in this process and, as of this date, has chosen not to [do so].

DC: What is your vision for the future relationship of the ICA and ACA?

JM: There is an ongoing invitation to all chiropractic associations to work with the ICA on issues affecting this profession. It is my hope for the future that the ACA will accept this invitation.

Perhaps the most important question at this point is whether a productive, meaningful "cooperative effort" between the ACA and ICA is possible without merger. It is no secret that merger attempts and cooperative efforts have failed numerous times in the past. Without a substantial level of unified action, the chiropractic profession will be challenged to succeed in the national political arena.

