

Marvelous Things Will Happen

Rand Baird, DC, MPH, FICA, FICC; Jonathan Todd Egan, DC, MPH, PhD (cand.); Paul Daugherty, DC, DABCO; Jason Napuli, DC, MBA

County boards of health. State health departments. Local chapters of the [American Red Cross](#). The board of directors of the [U.S. Bone and Joint Decade](#). The executive board of the [American Public Health Association \(APHA\)](#). State public health association leadership. Affiliations with the [World Health Organization](#). What do all these have in common? Chiropractors!

How did the door open to chiropractic participation in these diverse and exciting areas related to public health? It all began with chiropractic involvement in the APHA in the early 1980s. By 1995, chiropractic was officially recognized within the APHA with its own section ([Chiropractic Health Care - CHC](#)) and voting rights to shape APHA policy. Once the door was opened, it became clear that, as [Roald Dahl](#) said in *James and the Giant Peach*, "[Marvelous things will happen!](#)" Chiropractic efforts within APHA helped foster opportunities in other public health settings. Public health remains the most level and welcoming playing field for chiropractors entering integrated health care settings.

We are involved not only in the APHA, but also in other public health organizations, including some of those listed at the beginning of this article. [Dr. Egan serves on his county board of health. Dr. Napuli serves on the board of his local chapter of the American Red Cross. Dr. Dougherty serves on the governing council of the APHA and is the [American Chiropractic Association's](#) representative on the board of directors of the U.S. Bone and Joint Decade.] Our experiences as chiropractors serving in public health entities have been satisfying, and we want to extend a similar invitation to other chiropractors to consider service within public health.

There are many organizations in which chiropractors can participate at local, state, national and international levels. These are often health-related organizations that exist to disseminate knowledge or provide guidance or services. These groups seek to have diverse boards that reflect their respective communities.

Particularly at the local level, such boards consist of committed, passionate volunteers who want to make a difference. Membership in the APHA is well-regarded by those who make the decision to ratify appointments to these boards. It is a credential that identifies you as being in the same fraternity as others in public health. If your local board does not accept you as a physician member, don't take offense. You may need to be a community member rather than a physician member, as bylaws (or even state laws) may limit physician membership to MDs. Regardless, you'll be at the same table and can always lobby for changes once on the inside.

We want to give readers a true sense of our appreciation for public health; to that end, here are a few observations based on our individual experiences.

According to Dr. Napuli, an assistant professor at [New York Chiropractic College](#) (NYCC) and exhibit booth chair for the APHA-CHC, having the opportunity to serve on the Red Cross board has helped him develop a meaningful relationship with the community. It has broadened his awareness of issues that potentially affect his community, such as natural disasters. He feels that, as

chiropractors serving on such boards, we are able to use our experience as health care providers within our communities to provide guidance on many public health topics while gaining knowledge of the daily operation of a nonprofit organization. He also feels that such service is really about giving back to the community in which we practice.

Many counties also have local public health associations and groups for which health care providers are sought to serve on various committees. Two committees on which Dr. Napuli has served are the county health advisory committee and the long-term health committee. Both committees serve the community and discuss health outreach to our rural county to create awareness on important health issues, including nutritional concerns, epidemic outbreak preparedness, bioterrorist threats, vaccination clinics and access to basic medical/health care. As chiropractors, we have knowledge in many of these areas; our role is to complement and collaborate with members of the health care community to create policy and increase overall awareness of potential health concerns.

Dr. Egan, membership chair of the APHA-CHC, has served on his county board of health and found that he has been able to contribute meaningfully to discussions that focus on important issues in the county. Recent experiences regarding reducing tobacco sales to minors, understanding local outbreaks of food-borne illness, and prevention efforts ranging from bicycle helmet distribution to nicotine replacement therapy have been fascinating and valuable. He has been able to participate in meaningful ways that can affect the health of the entire community. .

Dr. Dougherty, an associate professor at NYCC and chair-elect for the APHA-CHC, has had the opportunity to serve on the APHA governing council and on the board of directors of the U.S. Bone and Joint Decade. It is exciting to be put on an equal playing field with other professionals from other disciplines represented on these boards. There is a great opportunity to be part of these national organizations and to have input in public policy (through the APHA) and national programs (through the USBJD) to influence public health through disease prevention and improving public education. As professionals in today's health care system, we need to be willing to step up and serve in any way that we can to improve public health. It has been Dr. Dougherty's experience that when chiropractors are involved in these types of programs, they are accepted as simply another member of the team.

Overall, serving on these boards and committees has proven to be beneficial for all involved. We are able to share their ideas, converse with other health care professionals and change perceptions of chiropractic, while having our own perspectives broadened and refined. Participation in the APHA helped open the door for this teamwork.

We encourage other chiropractors to increase their participation in mainstream public health activities and groups, including the largest integrated setting for chiropractic participation - the Chiropractic Health Care section. Please join us now at www.apha.org or send an e-mail to j.t.egan@gmail.com for more information. Come with a willingness to help and to serve, and marvelous things will happen.

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