

House Passes Bill to Expand Chiropractic Care to All Major VA Medical Centers

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed H.R. 1017, the "Chiropractic Care Available to All Veterans Act," putting America's veterans one step closer to gaining access to chiropractic care at all major Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers. The bill was approved by a 365 to 6 margin.

H.R. 1017 requires the VA to have doctors of chiropractic on staff at no fewer than 75 major VA medical centers before the end of 2011 and for all major VA medical centers to have a doctor of chiropractic on staff before the end of 2013. There are nearly 160 VA treatment facilities nationwide. Currently, the VA provides chiropractic care at 32 treatment facilities across the country.

The bill comes after a February 2010 VA report, "Analysis of VA Health Care Utilization Among Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Veterans," which cites "diseases of Musculoskeletal System/Connective System," such as back pain, as the number-one ailment of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans accessing VA treatment.

The [American Chiropractic Association](#) (ACA) believes that the inclusion of chiropractic care in the VA health care system would speed the recovery of many of the veterans returning from current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Chiropractic care has been proven to be a cost-effective and beneficial treatment option. In fact, a 2010 study published in *Clinical Rehabilitation* found that spinal manipulation provided better short- and long-term functional improvement and more pain relief in follow-up assessments than other physiotherapy interventions. Furthermore, a 2003 study published in the medical journal *Spine* found that manual manipulation provides better short-term relief of chronic spinal pain than a variety of medications.

House VA Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-Calif.), a strong supporter of extending chiropractic care benefits to military retirees and active-duty personnel, introduced the legislation. Over the years, Rep. Filner has worked closely with the ACA in securing support [for a number of pro-chiropractic measures](#). Rep. Michael Michaud (D-Maine), Ranking Member Steve Buyer (R-Ind.) and Rep. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) also deserve recognition for their support of this legislation.

"For too long, veterans have been denied access to the chiropractic care that they want, need and deserve through the VA," said ACA President Rick McMichael, DC. "I am proud that ACA has worked closely with our congressional allies, such as Rep. Filner, on behalf of our nation's heroes and in support of this important bill."

Prior to [congressional intervention over the past decade](#), no doctors of chiropractic served on the staff of any VA treatment facility. The availability of chiropractic care for eligible veterans was limited to VA "referrals" to doctors of chiropractic serving in private practice outside of the VA system. Such referrals were so rare that chiropractic care was essentially non-existent within the VA system.

Source: American Chiropractic Association

