

A Profession Divided? ICA Elections Bring New Hope

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The results of the ICA elections will be seen as a potentially pivotal point in the history of our profession for years to come. This year's elections were unique on several levels:

- The ICA has a brand-new president, vice president and secretary/treasurer. These nonincumbents, along with most of the other newly elected and existing directors, are poised to renew the ICA. They hold the majority of the board seats and have the support of the members.
- The ICA bylaws allow DCs to "join" the ICA for one quarter, vote, then let their memberships expire. This has resulted in uncommitted DCs having a significant, if not decisive, impact on previous ICA elections. There weren't nearly as many "join-to-vote" cases this year, although their relative impact would have been higher than ever before, given the reduced number of voting ICA members (reportedly only about 1,800).
- Newly elected President C.J. Mertz, DC, was elected because of his broad-based appeal. This will give him the freedom to make decisions with fewer obligations to a particular segment of the ICA membership.

What Will This Mean to the Future of the ICA?

Over the last several years, the ICA has tended to act like just another chiropractic fringe organization. Declining strength and membership have left the ICA in a position in which the previous administration felt forced to compromise its autonomy to band with more extreme organizations sporting only a few hundred members.

The current reform leadership has the power and opportunity to renew the ICA into an organization more appealing to the full spectrum of conservative chiropractors. While the ICA will want to maintain its traditional values, the organization must move to a more centrist position within the profession if it is going to grow and prosper.

But How Will This Help Mend Our Profession?

As has been reported previously,¹ the chiropractic profession in the United States is no longer two opposing philosophies. Today, our profession consists of DCs who believe in a broad scope of practice while maintaining the concept of the vertebral subluxation complex (approximately 88%).

According to the most recent study,² less than 20 percent see themselves as "narrow scope" (straight) and only about one-third see themselves as "broad scope" (mixer). The largest contingent in chiropractic considers themselves "middle scope."

To survive in today's health-care marketplace, the chiropractic profession must move forward

united. We need as many DCs as we can get moving the profession as a united force.

If the chiropractic profession is going to move forward at a reasonable speed, all the "wheels" need to be going in the same direction. If the ICA is going one way, and the ACA is going another, we, as a profession, will just be "spinning our wheels."

Mistrust is the issue.

As Dr. Mertz clearly stated following his election, there need to be meetings where relationships can be strengthened and trust can be established. To eliminate distrust, you have to have the right people on both sides of the aisle.

Do we have that now? Only time will tell.

A lack of effort on the part of the new leadership will spell doom for the ICA, which is slowly sinking into irrelevance. It will crush the hopes of those members who took a chance by electing reform candidates.

With only about 3 percent of the profession as general members, critics can easily say the ICA no longer matters. This is why the new ICA leadership will be under the gun to demonstrate to its members and the profession that this is not just the old ICA with new faces.

Based on his comments, Dr. Mertz seems to have a clear understanding that rebuilding the ICA will mean moving away from the extremes. Once the ICA truly initiates this process, the opportunity for unity will increase.

His comment, "United action can happen," brings hope.

References

1. New study finds unity in chiropractic. *Dynamic Chiropractic*, June 2, 2003. www.chiroweb.com/archives/21/12/19.html.
2. *How Chiropractors Think and Practice*. Institute for Social Research, Ohio Northern University, 2003.

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