

Why the APHA?

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Dr. Rand Baird is the editor of this column. His "Talk Back" forum and a brief biography are available at www.chiroweb.com/columnist/baird.

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Why did I, a doctor of chiropractic, join the American Public Health Association (APHA)? Perhaps more importantly, why have I continued to be a member, and why do I volunteer to work in support of the efforts of its Chiropractic Health Care (CHC) section?

It's all because of the vision I have for the rightful place of chiropractic in American health care, and because I have recognized that working through the APHA is integral in my life's mission: to bring improved health and wellness to my community, my nation and the world. Here's what I believe, and how the APHA can help to achieve some lofty goals:

- Chiropractic care is part of the foundation of health, along with a healthy lifestyle and a healthy environment. While not everyone shares that concept, the CHC section is continually opening minds and acquainting other health-care providers with chiropractic. Initially, many school nurses; dentists, social health workers; CDC epidemiologists; health economists; and others at APHA meetings had no contact with DCs. Now, they meet those interested in doing research to improve the health of the public, and they are beginning to recognize us as participants in the nation's health.
- The economic power that medical, hospital or drug industries wield in health care today is a major source of our nation's current health woes. The APHA includes a broad spectrum of professions that work to improve health, and it is not controlled by the AMA, the AHA or the PhRMA. In fact, many of its policies are consistent with reining in the excesses of these powerful and rich lobbies. While I don't agree with all of those policies, I do want to strengthen the voices that call for moderation and decreases in the use of prescription drugs, antibiotics and surgeries, along with better consumer access and control over health services.
- The promotion of health and wellness in all patients and the community is the most important job a DC has. This includes patient education, behavior change, preventive services and health-protection measures. I realize this goes beyond the limited view of spinal care some chiropractors have; however, I don't believe spinal wellness and whole-health wellness are incompatible. Additionally, I take a patient-centered approach: I ask myself what I want my doctor to do for me. I want to be informed about the various things I can do to achieve and maintain my own health, not just now, but in the long term. There is growing evidence that the public is requesting this information from doctors, and I want people to realize that many chiropractors want to meet their needs. The APHA (through its *Journal* and annual meeting) provides this type of information, which extends and updates what I learned in college. By keeping up with the public-health and disease-prevention literature, I am better equipped to meet the demands of health-care consumers who are ready to take responsibility to be healthy. I also believe this is the future of our profession - as doctors of

wellness and health, not limited to back pain and subluxations.

- Doctors of chiropractic should be major players in redesigning the health-care system of tomorrow. That means we must make sure our voices are heard, and be at the table when discussions of the problems facing the health of the public take place. The APHA is one of the major forums for these discussions. The opinions and policies it has developed are widely disseminated and respected. We can include chiropractic values and concepts only by demonstrating our commitment to helping improve the health of the public, and by taking part in debates on the planning and changes in our health systems.

I am among the growing number of DCs who have recognized that one of the best ways to help achieve these concepts and goals is to join with hundreds of my fellow chiropractors in the APHA. If you share the vision of chiropractic as a significant factor in keeping the public healthy, I ask you to join with us to make ours one of the strongest and most active sections in the APHA.

For more information, contact Dr. Monica Smith, membership chair, by telephone: 319-884-5173, or via e-mail: smith_m@palmer.edu. You can also download a membership application at www.APHA.org.

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