

# World Health Organization Adopts Landmark Tobacco Control Treaty

WFC, PALMER AND LIFE AMONG PIVOTAL CHIROPRACTIC CONTRIBUTORS

Editorial Staff

On May 21, 2003, The World Health Organization (WHO) convened at the 56th World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, where its 192 members unanimously adopted the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the first international health treaty of its kind.

The FCTC is designed to reduce the number of tobacco-related deaths per year by calling on countries to impose restrictions on tobacco advertising, sponsorship and promotion; establish new labeling standards; develop clean indoor-air controls; and implement tougher laws to prevent tobacco smuggling.

Among those involved in anti-tobacco public health campaigns were the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC), Life University and Palmer University, each of which played a pivotal role in helping develop and promote the FCTC.

"The WFC has had representation at the six negotiating meetings in Geneva during the past four years, and has developed anti-smoking posters and other materials that were displayed prominently at WHO as the treaty passed," said WFC President Dr. Paul Carey.<sup>1</sup>

Among those materials are posters, instructions for doctors of chiropractic, a patient informational pamphlet and "four questions to be asked by chiropractors in their clinical histories," noted Dr. Rand Baird, Chair of the WFC's Health-for-All Committee, the agency that developed the materials. "They also explain why chiropractors should actively support an international anti-smoking campaign," he added.

The idea of an international treaty to control tobacco use and its devastating effects on health was conceived by public health advocate Ruth Roemer, former president of the American Public Health Association (APHA) and professor of law at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Professor Roemer was in Geneva for the adoption of the treaty.

According to the WHO, tobacco is responsible for nearly five million deaths per year worldwide; these numbers could double by 2020 if the measures outlined in the FCTC are not implemented.

The biggest risk appears to be among the younger populations in many developing countries.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, WHO director general to the 56th World Health Assembly, asserted: "We must do our utmost to ensure that young people everywhere have the best opportunities for a healthy life. By signing, ratifying and acting on this Tobacco Convention, we can live up to this responsibility."

Forty countries are needed to ratify or otherwise accept the FCTC before it can be officially recognized. The FCTC will be open for signatures at the United Nations headquarters in New York from June 30, 2003, to June 29, 2004.

## *References*

1. Press release: WFC and Palmer at WHO for anti-smoking treaty. [www.wfc.org](http://www.wfc.org).
2. Press release: World Health Assembly adopts historic tobacco control pact. [www.who.int/en/](http://www.who.int/en/).

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