

Why Arnold Schwarzenegger Is California's (and Chiropractic's) Best Choice

FRANCO COLUMBU, DC, PHD, ON HIS FRIEND AND THE GUBERNATORIAL RACE

California doctors of chiropractic have taken a beating lately: From the lack of enthusiasm Governor Gray Davis has shown for the chiropractic profession, to the most recent attempts to limit patient visits, it is getting tougher for established DCs to maintain practices, and worse for those considering becoming chiropractors.

On Oct. 7, California voters have an opportunity to elect a replacement to Gov. Davis - or, as he has said, "This will be the first time in history a governor has been re-elected twice."

At the forefront of the 135 candidates for governor is Arnold Schwarzenegger, internationally famous actor, accomplished bodybuilder, and longtime proponent of physical fitness. Although he has been criticized for his lack of political experience, he is immensely popular - and a strong supporter of chiropractic.

One person credited with influencing Mr. Schwarzenegger in this regard is Francesco W. "Franco" Columbu, DC, PhD. A native of Sardinia, he and Arnold have both - numerous times - attained the coveted bodybuilding title "Mr. Olympia." With books, products, and movies attributed to him, Dr. Columbu has maintained a practice in Westwood, Calif., for several years. He is a staunch supporter of Arnold Schwarzenegger in his race for public office.

Dr. Columbu is well-aware of his friend's talent for making a company work, having seen him become a millionaire in his early 20s before embarking on a movie career. "The reason why I am a strong endorser is because he's a good businessman, and he knows how to run the state like a business, with 'no strings attached'; he doesn't owe anything to anybody - especially any special-interest groups. You're getting a guy with a clear conscience; a clear mind. He won't be pushed around, politically speaking, by anybody!"

Dr. Columbu is equally emphatic about Arnold's support of chiropractic: "Arnold is a very strong supporter of chiropractic, because over the years he has come to understand its benefits from several perspectives. This is especially true with training and from having aches and pains, where he has seen it work wonders firsthand. Many members of his family have seen this, as well."

"One thing that surprises me," Dr. Columbu observes, "is how we don't have more DCs available at athletic events - at all levels. Both Arnold and I have seen how an athlete can get 10 times the treatment by a chiropractor than a medical doctor will contribute. For example, when something goes out of place for an athlete, when he or she is adjusted right away, the injury doesn't even have time to swell. Our attitude is, "We'll fix that now!"

"He would be the best of governors," Dr. Columbu insists. "He is, above all, a determined leader - an extremely intelligent, articulate problem-solver. Nobody has seen this as closely as I have."

In the late 1960s, Arnold Alois Schwarzenegger left his native town of Graz, Austria, and came to the U.S. Besides writing articles for Weider Publications, he and Dr. Columbu became bricklayers,

with Arnold using proceeds from his work and contests to produce a bodybuilding course by mail. With the success of the course, the bricklaying business, and the help of fellow athletes, he turned his business savvy to real estate; he was successful in this, too. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin a decade later with a degree in business and economics.

While adamant about Mr. Schwarzenegger and his "complete confidence" in his ability to lead, Dr. Columbu also offers a word of caution to the chiropractic profession: "When Arnold Schwarzenegger becomes governor of California, we will still need the combined efforts of the chiropractic colleges, the associations, and the doctors in the field, to present to him what chiropractic can do for companies in the state by saving them money."

"We really need to open up that area and show that chiropractic problems should be fixed by a chiropractor. And when we present that, we will gain something very special - insurance that will cover more chiropractic."

Although he claims no political aspirations for himself, Dr. Columbu would have much to gain - as would all DCs in California - should Arnold Schwarzenegger become governor. He would easily be in line for an appointment to the board of chiropractic so neglected by the current administration.

"I don't have any say in this," says Dr. Columbu, "I leave it all up to Arnold - his instincts, his judgement - it's what will get the right people in there."

James Harrison, associate editor

OCTOBER 2003