

## **New National Board Leadership Maintains Quality, Explores Computerization, Begins Era of Open Cooperation**

All healthy service organizations undergo cycles of growth and change - seasons in their development. The National Board of Chiropractic Examiners (NBCE) is in a particularly notable period of change.

As an organization, the NBCE can be compared to a dedicated marathon runner. We prepare ourselves mentally and physically to run the next race and give the next test. We build up our resources, train our extended "body," and envision our plan carefully. When the race begins, we give everything we have - in our case, to present the best quality testing available. When it ends, we analyze and dissect our processes to learn how we can run even better next time. And the ongoing cycle continues.

The mission of the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners is to assist the regulatory community in protecting the public by providing the best possible examination tools at a fair cost. The state boards created the NBCE, and all of our exams have been developed at their request. We help the boards discern which examinees are ready to assume the responsibilities of licensed chiropractic practice.

To meet this goal, we must continually assess our own processes. We measure ourselves against our peers in professional testing to ensure that we have a legally defensible exam that is fair to the examinee.

In the past year, many of our NBCE processes have been carefully reviewed. We are pleased to say that the testing processes, in particular, shine brightly among the stars in professional licensure examinations. Our program continues to be at the leading edge of quality testing. However, that is not good enough for our board of directors and staff - nor should it be good enough for the chiropractic profession. We want to be the best.

To this end, we are continually pushing the National Board forward. Work is underway on a number of exciting efforts, with a focus on improving our test as well as serving the profession, particularly our examinees. Here's just a snapshot of the current story:

1. Additional computerization of NBCE exams is an important part of delivering the best possible testing service. While much of the NBCE is already highly computerized and efficient, we are evaluating how to extend this technology to the candidate's access to testing.

To plan this project, I have appointed a computerization committee broadly representative of the profession: Drs. Vernon Temple (VT), Jerry Blanchard (ND), and Frank Hideg Jr. (KY) serve as co-chairs. Other team members include Dr. Kenneth Padgett, chancellor of New York Chiropractic College; Dr. Gerard Clum, president of Life Chiropractic College-West; and Dr. Cynthia Vaughn, president of the Texas Board of Chiropractic Examiners. In addition, we have welcomed participation in the deliberations by Donald Petersen, Jr., editor and publisher of *Dynamic Chiropractic*.

Currently, computerization contributes to efficient application processing, test preparation, and scores analysis and reporting. For example:

- Using computer technology, our dedicated NBCE staff team has slashed the scores reporting time from the industry standard of 12 weeks to just under six weeks. Requests for transcripts from past exams are processed immediately.
- Computers help us analyze test questions carefully to be certain they are relevant to the test plans before they are administered; of course, the test questions are submitted and/or reviewed by chiropractic college and state board representatives before inclusion. The best available standard in determining the pass-fail point is central to the NBCE's processes. The tests undergo a rigorous post-exam analysis conducted by statistical and content specialists to ensure that each test is fair and comparable to past (and future) administrations.

However, computers don't provide all the answers. Every borderline score is individually checked by hand at no additional cost to the examinee, to be certain that a lightly made mark or poor erasure does not result in failure. All examinee comments are studied thoughtfully.

We plan to extend the computerization into test-taking. The first exam to be converted will be the Special Purposes Exam in Chiropractic (SPEC), an increasingly recognized tool for practitioner mobility and reinstatement cases. A presentation on this exciting effort is scheduled for the Federation of Chiropractic Licensing Boards' 75th Annual Congress, April 5, in San Antonio, Texas.

1. A significant redirection of the NBCE's leadership in the chiropractic profession is underway. As you are undoubtedly aware, a significant reorganization of NBCE occurred last May, with changes in our board, particularly regarding its officers. In our boardroom, a new energy and vigorous discussion of issues prevails. We welcome new ideas, and fiscal responsibility is at the forefront of every discussion and every decision.

The NBCE is stepping forward, out of a long, proud history of service to the regulatory community to meet the challenges of the 21st century. While not every concern that people have expressed can be addressed immediately, our commitment is to healthy dialogue culminating in thoughtful and timely change.

The mission of the NBCE is not - and never has been - to limit the competition or restrict the numbers of doctors in practice, nor is it to lower safety standards to allow as many doctors of chiropractic as possible to practice. The regulatory agencies have the responsibility to protect the public, and the NBCE provides essential tools to our partner boards.

The chiropractic profession is best served when competent, ethical practitioners deliver the best possible care to the patients that trust us with their health. The NBCE will not fail to uphold the public trust.

As president for the past 10 months, I have had the unique opportunity to help manage the health plan of a great athlete, the NBCE. We have studied the films of our past races, and have carefully and candidly assessed our resources. We are improving our strategy with improved testing processes, and are deeply committed to accountability and stewardship.

As a fellow doctor of chiropractic, I can give you my professional opinion with confidence: this world-class athlete is healthy and ready to run the marathon.

Your ideas and comments are welcome and encouraged. Please visit with us in person at our annual meeting, April 6, 2001, in San Antonio, or contact us at [nbce@nbce.org](mailto:nbce@nbce.org) (visit our website at [www.nbce.org](http://www.nbce.org)), or call (970) 356-9100.

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