

## Chance of a Lifetime for Chiropractic in Japan

### APPROACHING THREAT OF MANUAL THERAPY LEGISLATION

As reported earlier in *Dynamic Chiropractic*,<sup>1</sup> an application for the Chiropractic Foundation had already been submitted to the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW) by the Chiropractic Federation of Japan (CFJ). The CFJ consists of nine major chiropractic associations in Japan and represents the chiropractic profession in Japan. It was established about 10 years ago with the goal to establish the Chiropractic Foundation as a possible means toward chiropractic legislation under the auspices of the MHW.

All the required documents for the Chiropractic Foundation have been submitted to the MHW and all other necessary procedures fulfilled. The Ministry is now reviewing the application.

Establishment of a government sponsored Chiropractic Foundation is an essential condition for the chiropractic profession in Japan to survive. The reasons for this are threefold:

1. the approaching menace of manual therapy legislation;
2. the need for legal binding to stop uneducated chiropractors from practicing before the chiropractic profession in Japan is completely ruined;
3. the need for government and public recognition to gain a professional identity.

Many licensed doctors of chiropractic here are having a hard time in their practices, partly because of the numerous uneducated, unlicensed practicing chiropractors. In Japan today, there is no education requirement to practice chiropractic. We realize that the educational standards of chiropractic in Japan should be at the same level as in North America, Australia, and in some countries in Europe. We need to have the authority to both endorse an educational program and to ensure the standard is followed. It is meaningless to introduce an educational standard if nobody follows it.

We now are facing the chance of a lifetime: to gain recognition by the Japanese government and the public. The Ministry of Health and Welfare, basically comprised of medical doctors, had never taken our petition seriously before, but they are now working hard for us to establish the Chiropractic Foundation. This must be a miracle in itself. If we lose this chance, it will be a long time before we have such a chance again.

Executives from the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC) visited the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare on October 12, 1998. Most of us have the impression that the WFC is opposed to the establishment of the Chiropractic Foundation, though that is not the WFC's official position. This perception, however, is being used against us by the government. The WFC should realize it is risking

the future of the chiropractic profession in Japan.

The only issue blocking the Ministry of Health and Welfare from its approval of the Chiropractic Foundation is a few opposition groups within the chiropractic profession in Japan, although the majority strongly support it. The main reason for the opposition to the Foundation is that it is led by non-DCs. What does this mean? Does the president have to be a DC, or do all the executives have to be DCs? The Foundation will be comprised of many talented people from different fields. DCs will take charge in those areas which require professional chiropractic knowledge, such as chiropractic education and practice. In those areas that don't require chiropractic clinical knowledge, other talented people will be in charge, like in any other major professional organization.

The real reasons for opposition to the Chiropractic Foundation seems to lie in personal frictions that developed in the past. Those conflicts must be put aside. What is important is that the Chiropractic Foundation is a benefit to the profession and the public.

### Inclusion of Japanese Chiropractic into Manual Therapy

The other real possibility is that chiropractic will be absorbed by the manual therapist-led opposition. There is an approaching threat of manual therapy legislation. The preparatory committee for legislating practice of all manual therapies is comprised of seven professional organizations of licensed masseurs, acupressurists and acupuncturists.

The manual therapists recently made a decision to change the law regarding their licenses, a reaction to the many unlicensed manual therapists in Japan that are causing an economic threat to the licensed practitioners. The draft idea of the manual therapist license includes massage, acupressure, acupuncture and spinal manipulation (including chiropractic).

There has been established a provisional management for the nonlicensed practitioners, including qualification requirements for them to be eligible to take licensing examinations in the next five years.

### A Final Note

A legislative bill imposing legal controls against unlicensed practitioners, including chiropractors, was passed by the House of Councilors on Dec. 5, 1994. The new movement by the manual therapists is based on the old legislative bill. If this legislative bill is passed (manual therapy legislation), there will be no chiropractic profession in Japan.

### Reference

1. Nakagaki C. Proposed testing in Japan to I.D. qualified DCs. Dizzying array of acronyms add confusion to the chaos. *DC*, March 8, 1999.

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