

South Dakota High School Boards Vote Down DCs Performing Athletic Physicals

DUVALL'S TESTIMONY CRUCIAL IN HELPING STATEWIDE MEASURE FALL 27 VOTES SHORT OF PASSAGE

Editorial Staff

Under the current bylaws of the South Dakota High School Athletic Association, chiropractors technically cannot return an athlete to competition without the signature of an MD (or a nurse practitioner or physician assistant)!

In our June 14, 1999 issue, we wrote a front-page piece on South Dakota DCs fighting for the right to perform high school athletic physicals. We mentioned that Charles DuVall, DC, the president of the National Association for Chiropractic Medicine, had been advising MDs in South Dakota how to derail that effort.

For years, the South Dakota Chiropractic Association has been butting heads with the school boards over this issue. Finally, the two sides agreed to put it to a vote. The terms were that if 60 percent of the high school boards in South Dakota voted in favor of DCs performing high school athletic physicals, all the high schools would comply.

The odds were not in chiropractic's favor. South Dakota has a population of about 730,000, but there are only 230 doctors of chiropractic practicing in the state. By comparison, there are more than 600 MDs in the city of Sioux Falls alone. The various school boards held meetings to hear both sides, but chiropractors were not able to have a representative at each of the board meetings. However, Dr. Duvall was on hand at some of those board meetings, according to our sources in South Dakota.

Bruce Hagen Sr, DC, was present at the school board meeting in Sioux Falls, the largest city in the state, along with six other DCs. The DCs meet prior to addressing the school board, agreeing to "be as charitable as possible in our presentation and as noncontroversial as we could possibly be." The three medical personnel that testified against chiropractic, Dr. Hagen reports, "castigated the chiropractic profession for being incompetent in the ability to do physical examinations."

Christine Brandner, DC, spoke first, eloquently stated chiropractic's case. Dr. Hagen followed, asking that the attendees "pledge allegiance to the flag with liberty and justice for all, after all, chiropractors were asking for justice and liberty to perform the examination for athletes at the request of our patients."

The school board in Sioux Falls voted 3-2 in favor of chiropractic. There was reason to hope. Up until the final votes were counted, it appeared chiropractic had a chance of gaining that crucial 60 percent.

"But," (perhaps the most deflating word in any language) the efforts of the chiropractic profession were no match for the state's medical profession superiority in numbers and financial backing. The testimony of a chiropractor (Charles Duvall) against chiropractic certainly was pivotal with some

school boards.

In the end, the measure failed by 27 votes, leaving South Dakota as one of only four states in the nation that does not allow chiropractors to perform physical exams on high school athletes.

A trivial loss for chiropractic over a minor issue in a small corner of the country? We don't think so.

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