

## The World of Chiropractic

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I have just returned from one of the most stimulating conferences that I have been to in a long time. I was fortunate enough to attend the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC) meeting in Tokyo. (Editor's note: See "A Report from the World Chiropractic Congress," 7-28-97, DC.) The WFC, which consists of chiropractic associations from around the world, meets every two years to discuss issues, concerns, challenges, and successes that have occurred throughout the world. The WFC, and the chiropractors who participate, provide a unique view of the profession and of the world. It is a refreshing experience, one that I would recommend to every chiropractor, especially those from the United States. We sometimes think that our problems with the health care system are so important. Not to minimize our difficulties with managed care, but while in Tokyo, I learned that a chiropractor in Spain was recently sentenced to six months in prison for practicing medicine without a license: sort of puts a whole new light on our hassles with utilization review, doesn't it?

During the years that I have been attending WFC conferences (I first attended in London in 1993), we have seen interest in chiropractic mushroom around the world. Some countries have seen nearly a 300 percent increase in the number of practicing DCs. To put that in perspective, the number of DCs in Brazil has grown from 3 to 8; that's in a country with more than 100 million people. The Netherlands, which has gone from 60 to 130 chiropractors in the last few years, has recently had a 200% increase and report they could double again without meeting patient needs. In contrast, DCs in Canada are concerned about a pending overpopulation of chiropractors. To someone from Southern California, where it seems as if there is a chiropractor on every block, these numbers get my attention. What incredible opportunities there are for chiropractic around the world!

Besides the increase in the number of practicing chiropractors, we have seen an increase in the number of chiropractic colleges. In the past decade, we have seen colleges begin and flourish in Denmark, South Africa, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, and Quebec. It's my understanding that there is interest in establishing new chiropractic colleges in Brazil, Bolivia, Mexico, Croatia, and England. What a statement for the chiropractic profession to see education introduced into these areas.

While the introduction of education programs into new areas of the world is exciting, it has not come without conflict or controversy. A major concern is the standardization of educational programs around the world. This is a particular concern in countries without any licensing arrangements where any individuals can call themselves chiropractors. The future of the profession in all areas of the world will be affected, either positively or negatively, by these developments. It is important that we stay informed.

I have been particularly interested in the developing relationship between the WFC and the World Health Organization (WHO). Beginning at the 1993 meeting in London, the WFC and the WHO have been cooperating in the development of a text outlining the role of chiropractic in occupational health issues. During the past four years, the text has been written, rewritten, and edited and is now nearing

publication. As someone who has been actively involved in the industrial arena, I am particularly pleased with this development.

Representatives from the WHO have attended each of the WFC meetings and have developed a working relationship with the board of directors. Recently, the WHO granted the WFC the status of "non-governmental organization." (Editor's note: See "The WHO Establishes Official Relations with Chiropractic Profession," 2-10-97, DC.) In other words, they have officially recognized the existence and legitimacy of the chiropractic profession. This is, indeed, a milestone. Our thanks should go to the board of directors of the WFC for their dedication, diligence, and perseverance.

With the access to instant news, instant communication through the Internet, and almost instant travel, any sense we may have of being alone in the world evaporates. It is important that each of us understand and appreciate that what we do as individuals affects the entire profession. If we represent chiropractic in a professional manner, if we respect our colleagues, and if we are dedicated to improving our knowledge and skills, then we have served the profession. If we behave in an unprofessional manner, are guilty of questionable ethics, or practice questionable procedures, then we harm the profession, perhaps irreparably.

David Chapman-Smith, secretary general of the WFC, commented that in this changing world we must no longer be adversaries with medicine; that we must work side by side, instead of head-to-head. As interest in chiropractic grows around the world, it is imperative that we develop a working relationship with the medical and scientific community. It is only by opening channels of communication that we can survive in this changing world.

As countries struggle with their efforts to introduce chiropractic, and to develop legislative agreements that guarantee the right of chiropractors to practice their art, those of us in the "free" chiropractic world should reflect on the rights and privileges that we have. As in other regions of the world, the benefits that we enjoy have often been earned by the efforts, dedication, and sacrifices of those before us. Hats off to those who led the struggle for patients' rights to choose chiropractic. Hats off to the teachers who have worked tirelessly to ensure a future generation of chiropractors. Hats off to the researchers who have provided us with the ammunition to support our theories and arguments. And hats off to the WFC. Keep up the good work.

By the way, the next WFC Scientific Conference is in Auckland, New Zealand in 1999 (May 18-23). See you there!

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