

MPI's Chiropractor of the Year

Editorial Staff

Looking over the events of this year to select our chiropractor of the year, one theme was pervasive: chiropractic research. This year we reported on Dr. Manga's findings; a million dollar Canadian whiplash grant; NCMIC's one million dollar research grant to FCER; the North Carolina study that revealed DCs treat 33 percent of back pain patients, among others.

But the real coup for chiropractic research came this year when Western States became the first chiropractic college to receive a federally funded research grant. This success was followed by two other federal grants to chiropractic colleges: one to Los Angeles College of Chiropractic, and the recent grant to National College of Chiropractic (see the front page of this issue).

While the federal research dollars are paltry by comparison to those going to the medical schools (the NIH funds over a billion dollars each year to medical schools), it's a beginning.

This all leads us to the contributions of Dr. William C. Meeker, 43, of Palo Alto, California. Dr. Meeker is a graduate of Palmer West, with a master's in Public Health from San Jose State University. His master's thesis was on the development of a back pain risk assessment instrument. Dr. Meeker has been dean of research at Palmer West since 1989, and was named "Chiropractic Researcher of the Year" by the Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research in 1991.

Dr. Meeker is currently serving the second year of his third term as president of the Consortium for Chiropractic Research (CCR). Dr. Meeker did not seek a third term as CCR president. He is a researcher, and a researcher wants to do just that: research. And heading up the CCR doesn't give one much time to pursue one's own research. Dr. Meeker, for example, has been the principal researcher for clinical trials comparing chiropractic and medical treatment for industrial injuries to the lower back; for the evaluation of a new posture chair for office workers (who said research isn't practical?); for validation of predictive values of a back pain risk assessment instrument; and paraspinal EMG scans as a function of duration and classification of low back pain in symptomatic vs. asymptomatic subjects, among other research.

And when would he find the time to write abstracts if he continued on as CCR president? His abstracts, too numerous to mention in toto, include: "Advances in Manual Therapy Research"; "Quantifying Predictions of Low Back Pain Using Epidemiological Studies"; "Development of a Back Pain Risk Assessment Instrument"; "Quantifying Characteristics of Low Back Pain in Chiropractic vs. Medical Settings"; "Development of a Disease Prevention Program in a Chiropractic Clinical Teaching Setting."

So while Bill said no to a third term as CCR president, he is held in such high esteem by his research peers, that they nominated him and unanimously elected him to continue as president of the Consortium. It was reminiscent of Ross Perot. He didn't want the job, but his peers said, "You must," and in the end he acquiesced to their remonstrations. Fortunately for chiropractic research, Dr.

Meeker didn't bail out like Mr. Perot.

While it may have been a bit selfish on the part of the researchers, how could his peers have done otherwise? How could they not use a little coercion to keep the man under whose leadership the CCR has grown from seven-member colleges and three affiliate organizations to 13 colleges and 15 affiliates representing the US, Canada, and Australia? How could they have let the man go who has led CCR research on low back pain to achieve recognized status with the RAND Corporation, the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research's Back Pain Outcome Assessment team, and the AHCPR Back Pain Guidelines, which has led to a series of consensus conferences identifying protocols of validating chiropractic methods and achieving consensus on parameters of practice?

So Dr. Meeker is "stuck" with the job. He's still responsible for managing the research funds that went to the chiropractic colleges under the Wilk et al., settlement. Some of that money this year has gone to a \$260,000 two-year study on chiropractic care for chronic childhood asthma to researchers at CMCC and LACC.

And so an important part of the information explosion that we are witnessing in the chiropractic literature and the public accountability of the profession, is a result of the leadership of Dr. Meeker at the CCR and the affiliate institutions and organizations. One can only admire the efforts of Dr. Meeker and appreciate the accomplishments of the chiropractic research community and the CCR in the past six years.

"The future of the chiropractic profession is certainly brighter because of the efforts of Bill Meeker and the CCR team, said Daniel Hansen, DC, of Olympia, Washington. "Together, they're champions for chiropractic."

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