

Leaders of 34 State Associations Meet

Steve Kelly, managing editor

ORLANDO, Florida -- The convention of the annual Congress of Chiropractic State Associations (COCSA) flexed its collective muscles in bringing together an impressive representation of over 70 delegates from 34 state associations November 7-10 in this resort town.

While the weather in Orlando was unseasonably cool, the state officials warmed to the congress when David Chapman-Smith took to the podium Friday morning to discuss the Quality Assurance Conference (January 25-30 at the Mercy Center in San Mateo California) that will develop a consensus of chiropractic standards of care.

David Chapman-Smith, editor of the Chiropractic Report and secretary general of the World Federation of Chiropractic, called the Quality Assurance Conference a "most fortunate, timely-based initiative." While the Quality Assurance Conference has been in the planning stages for three years, the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (AHCPR) is currently conducting a panel to develop guidelines for low back disorders (a one year endeavor beginning in November of 1991). The importance of chiropractic developing its own standards could not be more timely. The chiropractic standards of care document that is created at the Mercy Center will thus be positioned to influence the AHCPR document.

Fortunately for chiropractic, Scott Haldeman, D.C., M.D., Ph.D., and John Triano, M.A., D.C., are members of the AHCPR panel.

Mr. Chapman-Smith described the qualifications of the 35 DCs that make up the panel and explained the process by which the guidelines will be developed. Mr. Chapman Smith stressed that the guidelines coming out of the Quality Assurance Conference "must be seen as dynamic rather than cast in stone."

State Reports

Each association had the opportunity to briefly report on chiropractic matters in their state. The delegates heard the triumphs and sometimes the tragedies experienced by our fellow states associations. We heard from the big and the small: California and Rhode Island; states who had recently unified their state associations: Washington and Arizona; independent associations defined by the VSC: New York Chiropractic Council, and Michigan Chiropractic Council.

While there was a diversity of chiropractic viewpoints evident among the state associations, it was clear that the states had many of the same problems and concerns in common and were working towards many of the same goals.

A special guest, Mr. Marc Jablon, president of a public relations firm spoke on "A Unified Public Image through Media Exposure." Mr. Jablon emphasized that chiropractic is not "defined;" that the public

perceives DCs as entrepreneurs, not doctors, and thus after nearly 100 years of existence, chiropractic commands only approximately five percent of the health care market.

Mr. Jablon advised the profession to follow the example of MDs and dentists: feud behind closed doors but present a unified public image.

Mr. Jablon stated that chiropractors cannot make a significant impression on the public's perception because too much emphasis and energy is going toward individual self-promotion. Gross advertising dollars spent by individual DCs, Mr. Jablon cited, was some 330 million dollars a year, more for example than Avis spends on advertising.

"We all know what Avis does," Mr. Jablon said, "but the public doesn't know what chiropractic does."

The key, Mr. Jablon pointed out, is for chiropractic to pool the advertising dollars of regional DCs to buy TV advertising time. Mr. Jablon pleaded to those states with multiply associations not to wait for unity to garner these advertising dollars, but to work together on the advertising front.

Mr. Jablon was followed by James Martin, vice president of the Colorado Chiropractic Association who played video highlights from Denver's TV station "News-9" undercover reportage, showing some Colorado DCs allegedly committing insurance fraud. (See "May Massacre in Colorado," November 22, 1991 issue.)

Mr. Jablon returned to the podium to speak on defusing negative chiropractic media coverage, using the "News-9" coverage of chiropractic in Colorado as an example.

Election of Officers

One last important order of business was the election of new COCSA officers. Robert Dark, D.C., of San Bernardino, California, vice president of COCSA assumed the presidency from John Martin, D.C. of Austin Texas. Rick McMichael, D.C., of Canton, Ohio, secretary of COCSA became vice president. Mario Spoto, D.C., chairman of the Pennsylvania Chiropractic Society was elected secretary of COCSA. Rollie Dickinson, D.C., retained his role as treasurer of COCSA.

As this year's COCSA drew to a conclusion, Robert Davis, executive director of COCSA announced that next year's congress will meet in Palm Springs, California. See you then; don't forget the sun block.

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