



NEWS / PROFESSION

No Carnival for Brazilian Chiropractors

WITH PTS PRESSING TO MAKE CHIROPRACTIC A SPECIALTY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY, THE WFC IS SUPPORTING THE BRAZILIAN CHIROPRACTIC ASSOCIATION'S FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE CHIROPRACTIC LEGISLATION.

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The current struggle in Brazil to enact legislation legalizing the profession of chiropractic may well be an indicator of what is to come for chiropractors in other countries fighting for legal recognition. In fact, the current situation in Brazil is so important that the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC) has taken the unusual step of supporting an international fundraising effort by one of its member associations - the Brazilian Chiropractors' Association (ABQ), which represents approximately 125 chiropractors, most of whom are recent graduates.



At the heart of the battle is the right of Brazilian chiropractors to protect their title and their profession as a separate entity from physiotherapy. Currently, chiropractors in Brazil have no legal protection. The government-approved regulatory body that licenses and regulates physiotherapy, the Council of Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists (COFFITO), has ruled that chiropractic is a specialty of physiotherapy. As a result, several part-time courses have started up (with the support of COFFITO) that provide a certificate in "chiropractic" to physical therapists after as few as 100 to 300 hours over a series of weekends. Graduates of these courses have formed the Brazilian Physical Therapists Chiropractic Association, hoping to legalize chiropractic, but as a specialty of physiotherapy.

One of the ABQ's (and the WFC's) biggest fears is that if chiropractic is only legally recognized as a specialty of physiotherapy, the trend may spread to other countries. A chiropractic specialty course is currently being developed in Chile by a physiotherapist, and PTs in Spain, Portugal and Egypt have been encouraged to push for chiropractic as a specialty in their own countries.

In an effort to protect chiropractic, the ABQ has prepared a draft law, which it hopes to present to the full Brazilian legislature in the near future. Unfortunately, it is facing stiff opposition from COFFITO, which has taken out ads in the major Brazilian newspaper, *Globo*, that state: "In attempting to create a new profession, the legislators are in fact trying to seize rights which have been awarded to the physiotherapist profession since 1969, rights which define and which are the foundation of Brazilian Physiotherapy. There is no social justification in transforming knowledge areas (specializations) into a new profession."

The ABQ is campaigning to show that not only are graduates and teachers of the chiropractic specialty courses unqualified, but that the course itself also fails to meet minimum World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines. As part of this effort, the ABQ has been involved in a lawsuit against one of the course teachers, who allegedly has a fraudulent chiropractic diploma from a school in the United States.

ABQ members have formed an independent Legislative Commission, coordinated by Dr. Sira Borges, a former president of the association. The commission, which includes representation from each state in Brazil, has received funding thus far from individual chiropractors and both of the chiropractic schools in the country, Feevale University in Novo Hamburgo and the University Anhembi Morumbi in Sao Paulo. The ongoing legislative campaign is headed by Dr. Evergisto Lopes Souto, a chiropractor who volunteered his services and moved to the capital, Brasilia, to direct legislative efforts.



However, with the ABQ and the Legislative Commission lacking sufficient funds, international help is required to fund this vital campaign. They approached the WFC and asked for the organization's support of an international appeal. The WFC Executive approved such support on Jan. 30, 2007.

Gerry Clum, DC, president of the WFC, in an appeal to members to donate funds to the ABQ, summarized the current situation in Brazil: "We are faced with a new challenge in Brazil. Instead of

the traditional opposition of a medical lobby, seeking no recognition of chiropractic, chiropractic is faced with opposition from a physical therapy lobby seeking laws that would define chiropractic as a specialty of PT - a dangerous first internationally."

The WFC suggests large member associations and associate members donate at least \$10,000 to \$15,000, distributed over a two- to three-year period if necessary. Other chiropractic organizations and individual chiropractors are asked to donate as much as they can. According to the WFC, the initial fundraising target is US\$75,000, which compares favorably to the US\$50,000 raised for the British Chiropractic Association's legislative campaign in the mid-1990s.

Donations will be collected by the WFC and held in trust for the Legislative Commission, with funds only paid out on invoices approved by the WFC Executive. For questions about donations, e-mail Khalid Salim, WFC administration manager, at ksalim@wfc.org, or contact the federation by calling (416) 484-9978. The WFC has created a donation form for the fundraising campaign; *Dynamic Chiropractic* has posted a printable version of the form online at www.chiroweb.com/brazildonations.pdf.

MARCH 2007