

Italy Straightens Up, Legalizes Chiropractic

AFTER A 17 YEAR BATTLE, THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT RECOGNIZES CHIROPRACTIC AS A PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PROFESSION.

Kathryn Feather

Seventeen years after the first proposal to legally recognize chiropractic and 33 years after the founding of the Associazione Italiana Chiroprattici (AIC), the Italian Parliament finally and officially recognized chiropractic as a primary health care profession.

According to this new law, introduced by Sen. Luigi Lusi, "It is to be established within the Health Ministry, without public funding, a register for doctors of chiropractic. The inscription into said register is reserved to those who possess a doctorate degree in chiropractic or equivalent title. The graduate in chiropractic has the title of Doctor of Chiropractic and may freely exercise his competencies as a primary contact practitioner in the health care field, according to current regulation. The chiropractor may practice in or be authorized within or with structures of the National Health Care Service in the manner provided for by the established ordinance."

The law finally came about as a result of Sen. Lusi placing the chiropractic amendment within the annual budget law in the middle of an Italian political firestorm. Both the Italian health minister and the Italian Medical Association opposed the amendment. Sen. Lusi stressed the cost-effectiveness of the amendment to the members of the House Budget Committee who already were dealing with a financially burdened health care system. As a result of Sen. Lusi's efforts and the progression of the amendment, the AIC organized an impromptu lobbying center in Rome that was connected to the AIC headquarters in Genoa, to coordinate and promote the passage of the amendment through the bi-partisan support of several members of parliament with a favorable opinion of chiropractic.

The AIC reports that Sen. Lusi, "almost single-handedly guided it out of the Senate's Budget Committee and assured its acceptance by the Senate itself. In the Camera, which is the lower house of Italy's bi-cameral Parliament, the amendment's passage was the target of an extensive lobbying attack on the part of the Italian Medical Association that was trying to monopolize non-conventional medicine through their own legislation, and the Italian Health Minister who was opposed to recognizing chiropractic as a primary contact profession."

According to the AIC, "We all worked hard to arrive at this result, but the real difference between this successful campaign and the many failed attempts of the past lies in the commitment demonstrated by Senators Lusi and On. Manuela Di Centa. Senator Lusi was motivated by his personal knowledge of the merits of chiropractic, being the husband and patient of one of our colleagues in the AIC, while On. Di Centa is an ex-world champion of cross-country skiing, whose career was helped and prolonged by chiropractic and who openly declared her desire to repay this positive experience with chiropractic by helping to recognize the profession in Italy."

According to Thomas Rigel, DC, a 1970 graduate of National College of Chiropractic who practices in Rome, "With a vote of 209 chiropractors for and 380,000 medical doctors against, we got it our way."

Chiropractic finally has a solid piece of legislation in this crazy country. We still have an uphill road to climb in establishing our scope of practice within the Health Ministry; the prospects for the profession are daunting and the responsibility for establishing a new method of health care in a major country, such as Italy, is overwhelming. As a profession in a country of 60 million, we are microscopic; but given chiropractic's tradition to overcome, we will manage to fulfill the need."

"The entire world of chiropractic salutes the Associazione Italiana Chiropratici on this historic milestone for chiropractic," said ICA President Dr. John Maltby. "We at the ICA deeply respect and appreciate the efforts of all involved and offer our most sincere congratulations. Our colleagues in Italy can now move forward to build chiropractic to even greater levels in Italy with official recognition having been secured. Their efforts have added significantly to making chiropractic a truly global profession."

In June of this year, the AIC and Parker Seminars will help Italian chiropractors celebrate and publicly illustrate their professional profile by hosting a special Parker Seminars in Rimini, on the Adriatic Coast of Italy. For more information about this special event, visit www.chiropractica.it.

FEBRUARY 2008