

ACA or ICA: Which Best Represents You?

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Last June, I was honored to represent Texas ICA members as their representative assemblyman at the ICA Annual Meeting in Kansas City. As a former ACA chairman of the board and past ACA Chiropractor of the Year, allow me to give you a brief background on how my transition from ACA leader to ICA leader occurred - and why it might be important to you.

Having worked amicably with ICA leaders while serving as ACA chairman, it is safe to say they learned I am committed to the core chiropractic principles of the profession remaining drug-free, subluxation centered, and separate and distinct. While some readers may repel from those positions, you should know (and as I detailed in "The Four Biggest Lies in Chiropractic"),¹ the ACA and ICA governing documents on those important issues were mirror images of each other ... and remain so today!

Now, here's the rub. While the official policies of both organizations on those issues are essentially the same, there is one major difference. The ICA has upheld them - most recently by filing a successful lawsuit against the New Mexico Board of Chiropractic Examiners when it illegally attempted to authorize prescriptive drugs - while the ACA took the most unusual step of removing its official policies on chiropractic being "drug-free" from the public sections of the ACA website. Adding insult to injury, the ACA recently made a decision to comingle the funds of the National Chiropractic Legal Action Fund with CHAMP in what some believe was done in order to finance other state legislative efforts for prescriptive rights.²

With its larger membership, the ACA is certainly the leader when it comes to political prowess at the federal level. In fact, from 2001-2003, the ACA achieved more regulatory, legal and legislative victories at the federal level than in the first 106 years of our history combined.³ More recently, the ACA spent hundreds of thousands of dollars successfully getting chiropractic coverage included in "Obamacare." (Unfortunately, only time will tell if the law will withstand legal challenges and if the extremely high deductible provisions will benefit the chiropractic profession and our patients, and thus warrant the very large expenditure of ACA dollars.)

While the ICA was the definite front runner in supporting and helping raise the necessary funding for the successful *Wilk* legal action against the American Medical Association, the ACA spearheaded the funding effort for the legal actions against Trigon Blue Cross Blue Shield and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. While both of the ACA lawsuits were largely unsuccessful, they did yield some peripheral benefits, but at a cost to the chiropractic profession of more than \$11 million.

Prior to my first ICA annual meeting, an ICA board member (who I am certain had never attended an ACA meeting) called to warn me I should not be surprised if the ICA meeting did not meet the high standards and professional protocol of ACA meetings. When I heard that, I prepared myself for ICA assemblypersons showing up in flip-flops and tie-dyed T-shirts, wearing B.J. necklaces.

My concerns were completely without merit. When I entered the meeting room just prior to the ICA opening session, I saw a large group of professionally dressed men and women conversing with each other collegially in the most proper and respectful manner. To a great degree, it reminded me of the members of the U.S. Senate who often heatedly disagree, but treat each other personally with utmost respect.

The annual meeting started with ICA President McLean, Vice President Oberstein, and Chairman Walseman addressing the assembly. The ICA leaders set the tone for the important issues to come before the meeting, and the assemblypersons sat and listened intently. I can tell you that during the entire two-day session (with day one lasting more than 12 hours), I saw nothing but hard-working doctors coming together to move our profession forward.

But their decorum during the two days of meetings was not what impressed me the most. Instead, it was the *esprit de corps* and camaraderie of all the ICA leaders present. It became obvious to me quickly that these 60-plus leaders actually trusted and respected each other because they all share the same vision for protecting and defending the core principles of chiropractic.

Some years ago, it was reported to me that a California chiropractic college conducted a survey of practicing doctors of chiropractic which basically concluded that chiropractors are "unleadable," and I have always believed that finding had merit. Both the ACA and the ICA have fine leaders who work incredibly hard to help our profession face many challenges. They are both trying to lead our profession, even though their respective general memberships are relatively small.

But for the first time in my 37 years of state and national association work, I finally got to see what it looks like from both sides. I can tell you that the difference comes down to focus. An association can only be successful when its leaders check their egos at the door, rolls up their sleeves and go to work on behalf of the commitment they have to the chiropractic profession.

No matter what you have heard or what you might believe about the ICA, I recommend you to take a new look. I am an "old dog" who has been around the block more than once ... and I can absolutely assure you that the leaders of the ICA are driven by their unyielding desire to protect and defend the core values of chiropractic; and who also have the best interest of the profession and the public at heart. So much so that I was reminded of Margaret Meade's famous quote: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

References

1. Edwards J. "[The Four Biggest Lies in Chiropractic.](#)" *Dynamic Chiropractic*, Dec. 1, 1999.
2. Edwards J. "[Commingling Money: 12 Questions for the ACA About the CHAMP/NCLAF Merger.](#)" *Dynamic Chiropractic*, Nov. 1, 2014.
3. Edwards J. "[Scoring Touchdowns From the 5-Yard Line!](#)" *Dynamic Chiropractic*, Oct. 20, 2003.

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