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The Drug Issue: Dead and Buried

By James Edwards, DC

In case you missed it, Nov. 7, 2013 was a truly historic day for the chiropractic profession. "Oh, really?" you ask. I will confidently answer, "Oh, yes!" That's because on that day, the Chiropractic Summit took a tremendously monumental action.

Without question, no issue has been more important or divisive than prescriptive drug rights for doctors of chiropractic. In a historic and profoundly significant unanimous position statement, the more than 40 important organizations that compose the Chiropractic Summit adopted the following clear and concise public position on chiropractic science and practice as a drug-free approach to health care:

"The drug issue is a non-issue because no chiropractic organization in the Summit promotes the inclusion of prescription drug rights and all chiropractic organizations in the Summit support the drug-free approach to health care."

Folks, to quote Vice President Joe Biden, "This is a big &*\$# deal!" for the chiropractic profession. For all of the most influential chiropractic organizations to unanimously make that bold and unequivocal drug-free statement once and for all makes drugs in chiropractic a "dead and buried" issue.

The Chiropractic Summit is composed of the most influential chiropractic organizations within the profession, and has been meeting since 2007 to discuss and develop a consensus on a number of important issues facing the chiropractic profession. The key member organizations include the American Chiropractic Association, International Chiropractors Association, Congress of Chiropractic State Associations, Federation of Chiropractic Licensing Boards, Association of Chiropractic Colleges, Council on Chiropractic Education, National Board of Chiropractic Examiners, chiropractic colleges, practice-management firms and chiropractic media.

In a Nov. 21, 2013 [news release](#) from the ICA, President Dr. Michael McLean summed up the decision extremely well:

"This definitive and unequivocal position statement puts to rest any question as to [the] position of all of the credible organizations within the chiropractic profession on the issue of drugs. This united front will allow the world of chiropractic to move forward with a new focus on the essentials of chiropractic's unique approach to health and healing, and stop the divisive and wasteful efforts required to address the drug agenda of a tiny sliver of the profession."

Dr. McLean added, "The unanimously adopted Summit statement has stopped any erosion of chiropractic's positive, clear identity from the issue of drugs and established a firm, positive foundation on which powerful new growth for our profession can be anchored."

The Chiropractic Summit's official news release on the same day included the following statement from Summit Chairman Dr. Lewis Bazakos:

"I am proud to say today that after much time, effort and energy, the Summit partner organizations – representing the leadership of our profession – have come to an agreement on the long divisive issue on drugs. This truly was an historic meeting."

Aside from those two organizational news releases, I personally interviewed R. Jerry DeGrado, DC, who serves as the Summit representative for the Congress of State Chiropractic Associations, which represents 56 state chiropractic associations and their 31,294 members. Dr. DeGrado stated,

"The process we had to go through to accomplish the drug-free statement has been a huge step in our growth and maturity as a healing art, which really encourages me for the future of this profession. I can confidently say that the development of this drug-free statement will be for the greater good of the profession, and will allow us to focus on the real issues facing our doctors and their patients. I am blown away by how far we have come as organizations, and as a profession, to finally be able to put to rest such a divisive issue."

Drs. McLean, Bazakos and DeGrado, I could not have said it better myself. I totally agree with all of your observations and comments. And now for two "insider insights" about how this action will materially and positively affect the chiropractic profession.

First, the vocal, minority pro-drug doctors within the chiropractic profession can now sit down, cease and desist because this was very likely a death blow for their movement. For those of us who have fought this minority for the past 15 years, my advice to them is that the profession has soundly rejected their pro-drug arguments. So, it is now time for them to rejoin the mainstream of the profession ... or go to medical school if they must prescribe drugs.

I know that Thomas Klapp, DC, who recently authored a compelling and timely three-part article against drugs in chiropractic,¹⁻³ and I (who authored two articles opposing drugs a few years ago)¹⁻² are happy to now focus our energies on other issues.

Second, the effect this "drug-free" statement will have on state legislators cannot be overstated. As a past state PAC officer for 24 years and past treasurer and chairman of the ACA-PAC, I have a fair amount of experience in the political and legislative arena. Based on that experience, I can tell you that even with the clout some state associations have – and even if every DC in a state were strongly in favor of drugs – it is fully unreasonable to expect that any state legislature will ever authorize doctors of chiropractic to prescribe drugs. And now that 40-plus chiropractic organizations have formally and, most importantly, *unanimously* taken a position in opposition to prescriptive drug rights, any doctor or splinter group that appears before a state legislature committee supporting drugs in chiropractic will truly be on an embarrassing "fool's errand" trying to convince state legislators that it is right and that more than 40 major chiropractic organizations are wrong.

The [non] issue of prescriptive drugs in chiropractic is finally over, and a huge debt of gratitude is owed to the Chiropractic Summit organizations for their forward thinking and responsible decision to take this monumental action. The chiropractic profession has now spoken loud and clear in its opposition to prescriptive drug rights. It is time to move on.

References

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