

## **The Death of the CCE Cartel**

By James Edwards, DC

After several organizations<sup>1</sup> testified in favor of the Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE) being renewed as the accrediting agency for chiropractic colleges, some of those organizations issued less-than-accurate communications implying that the CCE was victorious in its effort. The fact is that nothing could be further from the truth.

It is not my intention to identify the organizations that misinterpreted and/or misrepresented what occurred. For those organizations that attempted to "spin" the facts in order to place the CCE in the most favorable light, I will leave it to them to correct the record. Instead, I will rely solely on transcripts and the reporting of the objective and highly prestigious *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and let you make your own judgments. After your review, I think it will become obvious that in a word, the CCE got publicly "spanked" for blatantly and steadfastly ignoring the wishes of the majority of the chiropractic profession.

While using the word *cartel* might seem harsh, it is important to stress that the description of the CCE as being a "virtual cartel" did not originate from me or even from within the chiropractic profession itself. It actually arose during a previous hearing by a member of the United States Department of Education (DOE) National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI). For your reading pleasure, the committee member's harsh comments are below [with emphasis added]:

"Madam Chair, we've heard charges and countercharges from I trust a wide, fairly wide spectrum of the chiropractic profession. At least that's the way it seems to me. Battles over turf, battles over philosophy, maybe battles over personal ambition, but divisions of every kind. *And some of this, maybe most of it, is a consequence of, at least as I see it, a monopoly control of a profession which has led to the establishment of a virtual cartel, not unusual.* There are several other professions that we deal with that have a virtual cartel control of the profession. We can't change that, but we can consider measures that will try to *send a message to the prevailing control group that they should try to be more inclusive rather than less inclusive* and I suggest that we try to figure out what is within our range of alternatives to do that. Because I believe if

*we simply hear it, discuss it, anguish over it, and then give them five years of recognition, that we haven't been the impetus for any corrective action for the profession and I worry about the profession."*<sup>2</sup>

### **Harsh Words**

And now to the objective reporting of the highly prestigious *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Sit down, fasten your seatbelts and read what this impeccable, trusted source reported [again with emphasis added]:

- "The number of people who showed up to raise their concerns made an impression on Cameron C. Staples, a member and past chairman of the committee. Mr. Staple questioned whether the chiropractic-education council [CCE] had done enough to meet a federal requirement for accrediting agencies to *show that their policies and procedures are widely accepted by educators, institutions, licensing bodies, and practitioners.*"
- "'You've hit the jackpot on deficiencies,' Arthur J. Rothkopf, president emeritus of Lafayette College and vice chairman of the committee, said to officials from the chiropractic council [CCE]. Mr. Rothkopf said the number and nature of the problems identified by the department *indicated a 'sloppiness' on the accreditor's [CCE] part.*"
- "In the end, the advisory committee ... will recommend to the secretary to continue the chiropractic-education agency's recognition, with a requirement that the council [CCE] *show that it has made necessary changes after one year.*"
- "But the panel also took the time to add the expectations that the chiropractic accreditor [CCE] also *deal with issues about the acceptance of its policies* and show how the policies are advancing the quality of chiropractic education."
- "David O'Bryon, executive director of the Association of Chiropractic Colleges, said that overall, the lesson for the accrediting council [CCE] was that it needed to do a much better job of managing its image with practitioners: *'Always listen to your constituents.'*"<sup>3</sup>

Could the CCE have seen this coming and avoided it? Absolutely! The CCE had opposition input from the American Chiropractic Association, the International Chiropractors Association, the Congress of Chiropractic State Associations, Cleveland Chiropractic College, Life University College of Chiropractic, Life Chiropractic College West, Logan College of Chiropractic, Palmer College of Chiropractic (including Palmer Florida and Palmer West), Parker College of Chiropractic, Sherman College of Chiropractic, and 4,000 "rank and file" doctors of chiropractic. (It also had the benefit of my series of articles imploring them

not to change the existing CCE policies.)<sup>4-6</sup>

But rather than heeding this advice, the CCE thumbed its noses at us all. And now, an agency of the federal government has informed the CCE that it was dead wrong and must comply. And comply it will ... or cease to exist.

### **Next Steps**

So, where do we go from here? The motion that passed states that the CCE must "submit for review within 30 days a compliance report demonstrating compliance with the cited criteria and their effective application." Based on that requirement, you would think the CCE would sit up and take notice by immediately starting the process of making the required changes. Did it? Not according to the CCE elections, held just seven days after the warning it received on Dec. 15, 2011. Instead of electing new councilors who were committed to complying with the instructions given, the CCE re-elected four of the six sitting councilors in the "practicing doctor" and "at-large" categories for new three-year terms! Clearly, it appears that those re-elections were a signal that the CCE is going to try to weather this storm without changing its agenda or course.

For proof of its "batten down the hatches" position, consider that the CCE unbelievably re-elected a councilor who some view as the "poster child" for the CCE's long, misguided direction. How long has this person served on the CCE board as a councilor, executive committee member and/or CCE chairman? Well, he was already a sitting member on the board back in January 1998. To put that many years in perspective, some of his fellow CCE board members way back then were Parker Chiropractic College President Dr. W. Karl Parker, New York Chiropractic College President Dr. Kenneth Padgett, Northwestern Chiropractic College President Dr. John Allenburg, Life Chiropractic College President Dr. Sid Williams, Texas Chiropractic College President Dr. Shelby Elliott and Western States Chiropractic College President Dr. Bill Dallas!<sup>7</sup>

While I am sure the CCE submitted something during the 30-day deadline [after this article had gone to press], the much bigger issue is that the CCE was given only 12 months to remedy the "accountability" deficiency – which, by the time this article is published, means the clock is ticking, with only about 10 months left to fully comply.

In short, there is no time to appoint a bunch of CCE "blue ribbon" committees to study the issue and report back in a few years. So, in an effort to assist, let me make it easy for the CCE to immediately comply with the majority view of the chiropractic profession by simply doing the following:

- Reinstatement all references to the word *subluxation* in all places where it was removed or co-mingled with the phrase "subluxation / neuromechanical dysfunction."
- Adopt the definition of the "subluxation" as detailed in the Association of Chiropractic Colleges *Paradigm*.
- Reinstatement all references to the phrase "without the use of drugs and surgery."
- Expressly state that the Doctor of Chiropractic Medicine (DCM) degree is not acceptable or authorized.
- Request and accept the resignations of longtime (and newly re-elected) CCE board members Drs. Craig Little, Joseph E. Pfeifer, and John C. Pammer to signal to the chiropractic profession and the USDOE that the CCE understands the new direction it must take.
- Develop and adopt governing language that ensures representation on the CCE board from a broad cross-section of the chiropractic profession.
- Develop and adopt governing language that prohibits two employees of the same chiropractic college from serving simultaneously on the CCE Executive Committee (as occurred when Drs. David Wickes and Joseph Pfeifer, both from Western States Chiropractic College, served during 2011.)
- Develop and adopt governing language that ensures the CCE will follow the input offered by practicing doctors of chiropractic and representative membership organizations.

The ball is now clearly in the court of the CCE. If the council fails to gain recertification, the responsibility for that failure will rest solely at its feet. Again, I repeat: The CCE was warned by COCSA, ACA, the ICA, many colleges and 4,000 doctors of chiropractic. So, if the CCE continues to ignore the advice of those entities – who represent tens of thousands of chiropractic practitioners – it does so at its own peril.

And for those who will later this year start robotically repeating the mantra that we must have the CCE recertified or students will not be able to obtain loans and colleges will suffer, all I can say is, "Tell that story walking." The decision by the CCE to ignore the advice of the chiropractic profession is what put it in this precarious predicament in the first place. Should students and colleges ultimately be harmed as a result of the CCE's continued refusal to heed the advice of its constituents, the blame will rest squarely and solely on the shoulders of the CCE.

For the record, I want to stress in the strongest possible terms that I fully and totally support the noble mission of the CCE. However, if the organization is not willing to represent the majority view of the chiropractic profession by electing board members who represent all views within the profession, then I oppose its continued existence.

To be candid, it is totally inappropriate for the CCE "cartel" to attempt to lead the chiropractic profession; rather, it is the CCE's job to follow the majority view of the chiropractic profession. If the CCE remains unwilling to do that, then all I can say is goodbye and good riddance.

In closing, it's important to make one last important point. Thank goodness for the courage of the NACIQI committee members who decided to "rein in" the CCE. If they had not done that and had instead certified the CCE for five more years, the CCE would have been emboldened and empowered to continue its pro-drug, anti-subluxation, "cartel" agenda! If the NACIQI committee continues to monitor the CCE and remains unwilling to allow the CCE to take the chiropractic profession in a direction that the majority of its practitioners oppose, I believe this "spanking" of the CCE could be one the most historic events in the history of the chiropractic profession.

That's because the motion passed states that the CCE must obtain "wide acceptance of its standards, policies, procedures, and decisions." Based on the word *wide*, the directive was monumental, folks; absolutely monumental. The CCE now must truly represent "rank and file" doctors of chiropractic or have a new accrediting agency take its place. Should that unfortunate event occur and if students and colleges are harmed in the process, I repeat – the responsibility will rest squarely and solely on the shoulders of the current CCE.

### *References*

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