

REFUSING TO TAKE “NO” FOR AN ANSWER  
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ACA Chairman of the Board

The International Chiropractors Association (ICA) and the World Chiropractic Alliance (WCA) each recently published articles that were critical of the American Chiropractic Association (ACA). Specifically, the ICA criticized the ACA for not accepting the ICA’s invitation to hold a joint legislative meeting and the WCA commented that the ACA was looking for reasons to stop working with them. In effect, both organizations implied that the ACA was not interested in professional unity.

To avoid unnecessary controversy, the ACA chooses not to respond to every inaccurate statement made by other organizations. However, these two closely timed stories require that the record be set straight so the profession will know and understand the basis for the ACA’s decision relative to joint efforts.

First and foremost, it’s important to note that the ACA has an official policy on professional unity (ACA House of Delegates – 2000) that reads as follows:

*“The American Chiropractic Association reaffirms its policy in favor of professional unity and invites the International Chiropractors Association to join the ACA in forming a “Unity Committee” that will be charged with the responsibility of developing a merger proposal that will be presented to both organizations for formal adoption at the earliest possible time.”*

And what was the ICA’s response to this historic invitation? The October 2000 official ICA news release rejected the ACA’s invitation to hold discussions not once...not twice...but seven separate times! In fact, the ICA stated three separate times that merger was “not on the table” as a possible option or even for discussion!

When rudely rejected like that, most people would just “accept no for an answer” and move on. However, the issue of professional unity transcends and supercedes the self-interest of the ICA. Unity is of paramount importance to the chiropractic profession and for that reason, the ACA will not accept ICA rejections nor quit until that goal is ultimately achieved.

The ACA remains committed to merger because the official policies of both organizations are almost identical and because a merger would allow our small profession to stop wasting its limited resources on needless duplication of services. Even though the ACA’s official invitation was rejected by the ICA, it is still in effect and the ACA remains committed to making merger a reality. Now that Dr. Sid Williams has lost his seat on the ICA Board of Directors, the ACA is optimistic that the major barricade to merger has been removed and that the ICA will reconsider the ACA’s invitation.

So if a merger of the ACA and ICA is needed, then why wouldn't the ACA accept the ICA's invitation to work together on joint legislative issues? The answer is simple. "Been there, done that, got the tee-shirt."

Albert Einstein once said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and expecting a different result." Based on our recent experiences with the ICA and WCA, the ACA is now convinced that further joint legislative efforts would not produce a different result. Here are seven recent examples of initiatives that have been hampered or harmed by the ICA and WCA and why the ACA does not believe the profession would benefit from further joint legislative activities.

- At the ACA's invitation, a joint meeting of the ICA Legislative Committee and the ACA Legislative Commission was held (December 2000) in Arlington, Virginia. At the end of the day's discussions, the five ICA representatives (including ICA Legislative Chair Dr. Michael McLean) unanimously endorsed specific language for the Veterans bill. Within just a few days, the ICA wanted to amend the agreed-upon language since the ICA representatives forgot to mention that they wanted the word "subluxation" in the bill.
- While the VA bill was going through Congress, the ICA, ACA, WCA and the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC) all signed a written agreement that stated each organization would support the five members of the DoD Chiropractic Oversight Committee plus Dr. Carl Cleveland, III. After President Bush signed the VA bill into law, the WCA and ICA both unbelievably renounced the agreement (using different bases) and then refused to send letters in support of those individuals. The failure of the ICA and WCA to fulfill their commitment resulted in the appointment of five medical providers and Dr. Charles Duvall (who is aligned with anti-chiropractic groups) to the 11-member committee.
- After the ACA agreed to include the word "subluxation" into the VA bill that became law, Dr. McLean was appointed to the Veterans Affairs Chiropractic Advisory Committee. In his first formal communication to the committee, Dr. McLean unbelievably substituted the term "chiropractic problem" for the word "subluxation" eight separate times! If the word "subluxation" was truly important to the ICA, why would the ICA Legislative Chairman go out of the way to avoid using the word? Perhaps no other event better illustrates ICA inconsistency and how difficult it is to coordinate and sustain a joint legislative strategy.
- The ACA has spent many years fighting for federal legislation (HR 902) that would permit Medicare reimbursement for all chiropractic services as permitted by state law. Instead of accepting the ACA's invitation to help work for passage of this outstanding bill, the ICA introduced a competing

inferior bill that would provide additional reimbursement only for X-rays and examinations. This ill-advised ICA action has confused members of Congress and has hurt the chance of passage of the bill that would be extremely beneficial to doctors of chiropractic and our patients.

- The ACA filed a federal lawsuit against the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) to insure that only doctors of chiropractic would be permitted to correct subluxations under Medicare. Although the ICA Board of Directors endorsed the lawsuit, the ICA has yet to contribute a single dollar of support. In fact, to our knowledge, the ICA has not even asked its members to financially support the lawsuit that seeks to defend the subluxation.
- Along with the Virginia Chiropractic Association, the ACA filed a federal lawsuit against National Blue Cross Blue Shield and Trigon Blue Cross Blue Shield to halt unfair reimbursement practices. To date, the ICA has not taken a position in support of this important lawsuit, has not asked its members to financially assist and has not contributed a single dollar to the cause.
- The ACA has long held that state scope of practice issues should be decided at the state level by the state chiropractic association. When the WCA passed an official policy stating it would “intervene” in opposition to state associations, the ACA was appalled and informed the WCA that the policy should be rescinded. To date, that has still not happened. And along that same vein, the ICA in a recent editorial stated, “Rather than the ‘states rights’ stance of the ACA that accepts each state’s version of what chiropractic is, the ICA clearly defines the profession and its parameters of practice.” To a great extent, these two “big brother” dictates illustrate the problem and why joint efforts will seldom yield positive outcomes.

The ACA’s decision to forego further joint legislative efforts will stop masking and stop perpetuating the real problem...disunity. Although the ICA continues to say that multiple organizations are good for chiropractic--likening it to having Democratic and Republican parties--they are simply wrong. When the United States goes to war, we do not go to war as Republicans or Democrats. We go to war as Americans and we fight under one flag.

So the next time you hear an ICA leader talking about how the ICA and ACA should unite on legislative efforts, interrupt and say they got it half right...the ACA and ICA should unite. Period. Tell them it is time for this profession to end the civil war that has pitted our brothers and sisters against one another for so long. Tell them it is time to put the profession ahead of leadership titles, personal agendas and egos. Tell them it is time for this profession to stop wasting our limited resources on needless duplication of services. Tell them that our division and disunity is playing right into the hands of our enemies. Tell them it is time for

this profession to start speaking with one voice from one united national organization. Tell them it is time for all doctors of chiropractic to fight under one flag!

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