

An Open Letter to ICA Leaders: The ACA and ICA Need to Merge

By James Edwards, DC

In April 2007, the Congress of Chiropractic State Associations (COCSA) Board of Directors courageously voted to demand a merger between the American Chiropractic Association (ACA) and the International Chiropractors Association (ICA). As might be expected, the ACA immediately issued two releases, stating that the ACA was ready, willing and able to explore this important opportunity for the profession. In fact, the ACA already has a "unity committee" (on which I serve) in place, along with a formal policy in favor of professional unity.

Based on history, it also was not at all unexpected that the ICA would give an excuse why it was important for the profession to remain divided, to continue to speak with multiple voices and to continue to waste money on duplicative services! And true to form, the ICA did just that in an official news release, using the following flawed basis for why the chiropractic profession should remain divided:



"There are basic chiropractic philosophical tenets that ICA holds supreme and are not subject to compromise. It is the separate and clear voice of the ICA that has created a system of checks and balances in our profession. Over the past several decades, it has been painfully obvious that this separate voice has prevented the profession from drifting in a direction that ICA views as clearly in violation of our philosophical tenants, as well as detrimental to our profession and the unique contribution we offer the public."

In regard to that statement, I have a two-word response: "Oh, really?" Are there really ICA "chiropractic philosophical tenets" that conflict with ACA tenets, or is that just a tired talking

point from years past? And if there really are conflicting tenets, this is my open question to ICA leaders: Specifically, what are they?

The truth is that the official policy statements of the ICA and ACA are almost mirror images of each other! To prove that point, I researched and published an article on this very subject way back in 1999. Since nothing of significance has changed with either organization's official policies since that time, I believe it's important for every doctor of chiropractic - and especially current ICA leaders - to again read the article in its entirety. It is reprinted as follows.

The Four Biggest Lies in Chiropractic

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Currently, there are four big lies circulating in the chiropractic profession:

1. The ACA supports mandatory immunizations, and the ICA does not.
2. The ACA is pro-drugs and pro-surgery, and the ICA is not.
3. The ACA does not support chiropractic being a separate and distinct science, and the ICA does.
4. The ACA does not recognize the vertebral subluxation complex, and the ICA does.

There! As distasteful as it was, I was able to repeat all four of them. How many times have you heard one or more of those big lies? Two times ... five times ... 100 times? Have you wondered who started them? No one knows for sure, but they certainly did not originate with the ICA or the ACA.

It's important that the profession knows the truth, because the telling and retelling of the four biggest lies has become a major obstacle to national unity. It is also why so many DCs do not support the crucial work that needs to be done at the national level.

In order to set the record straight, it will be necessary to mention the ICA several times. The reader should understand that none of the references to the ICA is intended to be critical in any way. That is especially true because, as you will see, the policies of the ICA and ACA are essentially the same. Don't take my word for it; check it out for yourself at the ACA and ICA Web sites, where all their official policies and positions can be reviewed (ACA: www.amerchiro.org; ICA: www.chiropractic.org).

Big Lie #1: The ACA supports mandatory immunizations, and the ICA does not.

Let's see if that's true. One of the statements below is the official position of the ACA; the other is the official position of the ICA. See if you can tell which policy belongs to which organization:

1. "Since the scientific community acknowledges that the use of vaccines is not without risk, (this association) supports each individual's right to freedom of choice in his/her own health care based on an informed awareness of the benefits and possible adverse effects of vaccination. (This association) is supportive of a conscience clause or waiver in compulsory vaccination laws, thereby maintaining an individual's right to freedom of choice in health care matters and providing an alternative/elective course of action regarding vaccination."
2. "(This association) recognizes that the use of vaccines is not without risk. (This association) supports an individual's right to select his or her own health care and to be made aware of the possible adverse effects of vaccines upon a human body. In accordance with such principles and based upon the individual's right to freedom of choice, (this association) is opposed to compulsory programs which infringe upon such rights. (This association) is supportive of a conscience clause or waiver in compulsory vaccination laws, providing an elective course of action for all regarding immunization, thereby allowing patients freedom of choice in matters affecting their bodies and health."

Time's up. Which policy belongs to the ACA and which to the ICA? Did you notice a difference in the two policies on mandatory immunization? Of course not, because there is no difference! The policies of the two national associations are almost identical! From now on, when you hear or read the big lie that the ACA supports mandatory vaccinations, you will know that the speaker or author is being dishonest with you. (For the record, "A" is the official position of the ACA.)

Big Lie #2: The ACA is pro-drugs and pro-surgery, and the ICA is not. Here again, let's see if there is any difference between the ACA's position on drugs and surgery and the ICA's position. One of the following comes from the ACA Master Plan and the other is the official policy of the ICA. Which one belongs to which organization?

1. "(This association) holds that the best interests of both the public and the chiropractic profession are served by maintaining chiropractic as a ... drugless, non-surgical alternative form of health care ... (This association) recognizes that the various state legislatures have the right to grant Doctors of Chiropractic the option to qualify, and thereafter utilize procedures which are not within the Association's view of the parameters of the clinical application of traditional chiropractic."
2. "Chiropractic is a drug-free, non-surgical science and, as such, does not include

pharmaceuticals or incisive surgery. Without prejudice to our commitment to this vital core concept and, in conformity with the nation's antitrust laws, chiropractors may elect in their practice to use common domain procedures, otherwise allowed by applicable law, and assuming they are properly qualified by background, education and training to do so."

OK, there you go. Which one is the policy of the ACA, and which is the position of the ICA? Doesn't matter, does it? Why? Because both policies are essentially the same, with both deferring final authority to the states. The words "drug-free," "drugless" and "non-surgical" leave no doubt that both ACA and ICA are unequivocally opposed to drugs and surgery becoming part of chiropractic practice. ("B" is the official position of the ACA.)

One last thing about drugs. The ACA recently proved that its anti-drug policy is more than just words. In 1996, a few pro-drug DCs (not ACA delegates) submitted a proposal to the ACA Annual Meeting to create a pharmaceutical council. That measure was defeated in the ACA Council of Delegates by a unanimous 57-0 vote! So, the next time an author or speaker starts telling you that the ACA is pro-drugs and pro-surgery, you will know that he or she is being dishonest.

Big Lie #3: The ACA does not support chiropractic being a separate and distinct science, and the ICA does. Fasten your seat belts, because here we go again. Which one of the following positions belongs to the ACA and which belongs to the ICA?

1. "(This association) holds that the best interests of both the public and the chiropractic profession are served by maintaining chiropractic as a separate and distinct ... form of health care."
2. "The objectives of this organization are to maintain the science of chiropractic as a separate and distinct healing arts profession."

Again, the policies are almost identical, with "B" being the position of the ACA. There is no question that the ACA and ICA are both committed to chiropractic remaining "separate and distinct." The ACA has even taken it one step further by adopting an official policy in opposition to the "Doctor of Chiropractic Medicine" degree. So, the next time you hear this big lie, you will know it is not true.

Big Lie #4: The ACA does not recognize the vertebral subluxation complex, and the ICA does. Most would agree that a good way to determine if an organization recognizes an entity is if it is contained in its official policies, and if the organization has taken the time and effort to define the entity. The references to subluxation in the policies of the ACA and ICA follow. See if you can tell which ones belong to the ACA and

which ones belong to the ICA.

1. "Manipulable Subluxation: A subluxation in which altered alignment, movement, and/or function can be improved by manual thrust procedures.
Subluxation: A motion segment, in which alignment, movement integrity, and/or physiological function are altered although contact between joint surfaces remain intact.
Subluxation Complex: A theoretical model of motion segment dysfunction (subluxation), which incorporates the complex interaction of pathological changes in nerve, muscle, ligamentous, vascular and connective tissues.
Subluxation Syndrome: An aggregate of signs and symptoms that relate to pathophysiology or dysfunction of spinal and pelvic motion segments or to peripheral joints."
2. "Of primary concern to chiropractic are abnormalities of structure or function of the vertebral column known clinically as the vertebral subluxation complex. The subluxation complex includes any alteration of the biomechanical and physiological dynamics of contiguous spinal structures which can cause neuronal disturbances."

As you can see, the ACA recognizes the vertebral subluxation complex, and so does the ICA. (By the way, the four definitions under "A" belong to the ACA.) With the filing of the HCFA lawsuit by the ACA, some have suggested that the ACA has absolutely proven its commitment to subluxation. It's important to note that the heart of that federal lawsuit is to prohibit non-chiropractors from performing chiropractic adjustments to "*correct a subluxation.*"

So, the next time you hear that the ACA does not recognize the vertebral subluxation, realize that you are hearing a lie and remember that the ACA is the national association fighting the federal government so subluxation will remain the sole domain of the chiropractic profession.

The Harm to National Unity

So, how do these four biggest lies hamper national unity? A few years ago, Dr. Fred Barge (*Dynamic Chiropractic*, May 22, 1992 and July 3, 1992) chastised the ACA for not having an immunization policy, and for being pro-drugs and pro-surgery. Dr. Barge clearly defined what was needed for national unity when he said the following:

"The one basic concept that will create unity for the chiropractic profession is a definitive stance! Once this has been achieved, unity will evolve with little or no effort. The effort will be in the development of a definitive stance and, in my opinion; the subject of immunization will play an

important role."

As you have already seen, the ICA and ACA now have identical policies on mandatory immunization, "separate and distinct," drugs, surgery and subluxation. And it doesn't stop there. A detailed analysis of the policies of the ACA and ICA reveals that both organizations have similar or identical positions on almost every issue, including primary care, chiropractic practice, diagnosis, thermography and X-ray. The questions that need to be answered are these:

- Since both the ACA and ICA have similar stances on all major issues, including identical "definitive stances" on mandatory immunizations, why hasn't national unity "evolved" as predicted?
- Do some continue to tell the four biggest lies to keep national unity from becoming a reality?
- Do some continue to oppose a unified profession based on what's best for them personally, rather than what's best for chiropractic?

The bottom line is this. The overwhelming majority of ICA leaders and the overwhelming majority of ACA leaders are highly principled, hard-working volunteers who unselfishly give their time, expertise and energy for the betterment of the chiropractic profession. Maybe it's time to combine all those talents. Maybe it's time for chiropractic to speak with one powerful voice. The American Chiropractic Association extends an open invitation to meet with any other chiropractic group or organization to discuss issues and negotiate agreement in order to achieve a unified profession.

To the best of my recollection, I am the only person who was involved in all of the 2000-2004 unity efforts of COCSA, Dr. Carl Cleveland III, Palmer College of Chiropractic, as well as the Joint ACA-ICA Legislative Committee meetings. Based on those very unique experiences, it is my opinion that the only things keeping an ACA/ICA merger from occurring now (in 2007) is what kept it from happening back then - positions, power and rhetoric.

Isn't it time that the rank-and-file members of both the ACA and ICA tell its leaders that positions, power and rhetoric are not important to them? Isn't it time we tell the leaders of both the ACA and ICA that this profession is at war against our enemies and that we need to fight under one flag? Isn't it time we demand that the ICA and ACA merge?

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