Looking Back: 2006

By Editorial Staff

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary as the definitive news and information source for the chiropractic profession, we look back at the important events as reported in DC since 1983, while also looking forward to the future. Throughout 2008, we will feature a review of the top headlines in chiropractic for a given year, along with an article on the future of chiropractic authored by an influential member of the profession.

January 2006: Life University Returns to Normal

On Nov. 12, 2005, the Council on Chiropractic Education’s Commission on Accreditation (COA) announced it had granted accreditation to the doctor of chiropractic program at Life University. The announcement, delivered at a COA meeting in Phoenix, provided a fitting conclusion to what many consider the most tumultuous four-year period in the university’s history.

The announcement by the CCE comes 11 months after the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) released Life from a sustained period of academic probation and reaffirmed its regional accreditation. Had SACS chosen to revoke Life’s accreditation, rather than place it on probation, the school’s students would not have qualified for federally subsidized student loans and the university almost certainly would have been forced to shut its doors. Instead, faculty, alumni and supporters of the college raised more than $5 million to help bring Life out of debt and make the university more financially stable.

"Several factors have contributed to our progress, including extraordinary commitment from chiropractors nationally and internationally, as well as financial and business support from the greater Atlanta community," noted Dr. Guy Riekeman, Life’s president since March 2004. He also cited a number of administrative changes, including a near-complete reorganization of the university’s board of trustees, which has imbued the school with "a new vision" of what the university will become.

"We certainly have come a long way in less than two years," he said. "But Life isn’t interested in getting back to where it was. We want to take it to a whole new place of excellence, integrity and accomplishment."
January 2006: RMIT-Japan Becomes First Accredited Chiropractic School in Asia

On Sept. 17, 2005, more than 300 students, staff and associates of Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University’s Japan Unit (RMIT-Japan) held a ceremony in recognition of two milestones in the school’s history. In addition to marking its 10-year anniversary, the unit celebrated a landmark achievement in chiropractic education, becoming the first school in Asia to receive full accreditation for its Bachelor of Applied Science/Bachelor of Chiropractic Science degree program.

RMIT-Japan’s chiropractic program received full accreditation from the Australasian Council on Chiropractic Education (ACCE), one of two agencies in Australia that accredits university chiropractic programs. In a Sept. 5, 2005 letter addressed to the unit, ACCE President Peter Drake announced the program would be accredited through Dec. 31, 2008, and called the accreditation "a significant event" for chiropractic.

At the ceremony, Dr. Kazuyoshi Takeyachi, senior executive officer of the chiropractic unit at RMIT-Japan, praised the Japanese Chiropractic Association for its help in the creation and maintenance of the chiropractic unit, and for promulgating "the highest ideals" in developing the chiropractic profession in Japan. Dr. Phillip Ebrall, head of the division of chiropractic at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia, attributed the success of the program to the high levels of "personal vision, group commitment and trust" between the JCA and RMIT, and emphasized Dr. Takeyachi’s role in achieving an accredited, university-level chiropractic program.

The chiropractic program at RMIT-Japan was established in 1995 through an agreement between RMIT University-Melbourne and the JCA. It is located in Shinbashi, a renowned business district in central Tokyo. The program consists of a four-year, 4,208-hour course of study that combines basic science with chiropractic diagnosis and practice, and an extensive clinical internship. Graduates of the program receive bachelor’s degrees in both chiropractic science and applied science.

June 2006: Michigan Chiropractic Associations Decide to Merge

Chiropractic unity is a common theme in the profession today, albeit a complex one. Some have embraced the issue and are working to build relationships; some still bristle at the thought of compromise and embracing "the other side." On the side of unity are the Michigan Chiropractic Association (MCA) and the Michigan Chiropractic Society (MCS), who have announced an agreement, in principal, to merge.
Following the Michigan example, the Virginia Chiropractic Association (VCA) and the Virginia Society of Chiropractic (VSC) also have met to discuss unity possibilities.

As we go to press, the MCA and the MCS are preparing documents for each board to consider. The documents will include both financial and membership information. Board members will vote on June 1, 2006, at a special joint board meeting. The merger becomes effective upon member ratification. The MCA and the MCS have worked together successfully in the past, most recently regarding scope-of-practice legislation and legal actions against discriminatory insurance practices.

This is not the first time the two Michigan chiropractic groups have explored the possibility of forming a united front. On Aug. 7, 2005, the MCA and the MCS each appointed members to a "unification steering committee" in an effort to explore a possible merger. Almost immediately after the announcement of the steering committee, a survey was e-mailed to more than 1,400 chiropractors in Michigan regarding the potential merger. Approximately 90 percent of those who responded were in favor of the proposed merger. Of those who responded, 45 percent were MCA members, 34 percent were MCS members and 21 percent were not members of either association. The survey also revealed that the two associations believed they were in agreement on 85 percent of the issues affecting the state’s chiropractors.

In Virginia, representatives from both the VCA and the VSC met recently to discuss the feasibility of the two groups unifying. Prior to the meeting, both groups polled their membership to determine if there was statewide interest among the profession to see both groups unified. Leaders of both groups committed to sending out a joint press release to all DCs statewide, scheduling the next "Unity Session" to take place during the joint Medicare seminar that both groups are bringing to Richmond, Va., on June 24.

And on May 6-7, 2006, the "Colorado Chiropractic Unity Committee" held the first-ever Colorado Unity Symposium, which brought together members of the Colorado Chiropractic Association, Colorado Chiropractic Society, Colorado Chiropractic Wellness Alliance and others to discuss the importance of becoming a unified force within the profession. Terry Yochum, DC, DACBR, chair of the committee, invited attendees to share their insights and strategies for unifying the state’s chiropractic profession. Gene Veno, well-known for his success in helping merge six chiropractic associations in New Jersey, also participated in the symposium and facilitated a panel discussion.
July 2006: Foundation Begins Advertising Campaign

The Foundation for Chiropractic Progress is launching its much-anticipated advertising campaign with full-page, four-color advertisements in four of the most widely read publications in the United States. The foundation ads will be published in the July 24 issue of *US News & World Report*, the July 24 issue of *Sports Illustrated*, the Aug. 21 issue of *Newsweek* and the Aug. 21 issue of *USA Today*.

The full-page ads will be published nationally in all but *Sports Illustrated*, in which it will be published regionally. The initial advertising push will reach more than 8 million readers with good news about the value of chiropractic care. Featured prominently in the ads is Sarah Harding, Ms. Fitness USA for 2006. (She also won the event in 2004.)

A chiropractic patient since she was a young child, Sarah is very outspoken about chiropractic: "Basically, I’ve always believed in chiropractic care. My parents introduced my brothers and myself to chiropractic care when we were very young and it’s been an instrumental part of my life. I believe that it allowed me to do gymnastics when I was very little and allowed me to stay in sports and lead a very active lifestyle. I think it’s natural to have aches and pains when you bend your body in directions it wasn’t necessarily meant to [be bent in], so it makes sense to go to a chiropractor to get my body back in alignment. Ever since I can remember, I’ve gone to a chiropractor.

"For me, whether you’re a professional athlete or not - my parents aren’t professional athletes and they’ve been to chiropractors for as long as I can remember, at least for the last 30 years and it helps them in their everyday life, it helps them in their mobility and in just feeling happy - when you feel like you’ve got a healthy body, you’re going to move more comfortably. It’s going to affect your relationships and it’s going to affect the work that you do, no matter what work you do, whether you’re sitting at a computer or playing outside or whatever you may be doing. I strongly recommend chiropractic care for everyone; however, each person is different and requires different needs to live a healthy life.

"The biggest impact it had for me was when I was a competitive gymnast. I was 11 or 12 years old when I started to have pain in my wrist and it got to the point where it really frightened me because I didn’t know what was going on with my body. I think that’s very common for people to get scared when they realize their body isn’t functioning normally. It’s not functioning the way it’s supposed to or the way it used to. When you deal with pain, it’s a lot more than a physical response; there’s a lot of emotional response that goes along with it. So, as a young kid or a young adolescent, I started to get really scared and I thought,
what if I can’t continue gymnastics? What if? I’ve got this huge gymnastics meet approaching in the next week and a half. What if I can’t go?

"I was supposed to travel to the mainland from Hawaii and there was a big meet in California and we went first to an orthopedic doctor, who basically prescribed rest and some anti-inflammatory. And I thought, OK, I’ll do that, but it doesn’t seem to be helping much. It doesn’t seem to be helping as quickly as I need. Then I went to my chiropractor and he was not only doing adjustments, he was doing a lot of ice - I would soak my hand in ice for a little while just to reduce the swelling, because there was a lot of swelling going on, but he basically did a lot of other therapy in addition to just rest.

In 10 days, he was able to get my wrist mobile again, feeling healthy, and I was able to make it to the gymnastics meet. And I won the meet. ... I actually wanted to go to the chiropractor after that because I thought, Wow! I really felt he could work miracles and part of it was because I began to believe in what he was doing and see the benefits."

September 2006: Three Colorado Chiropractic Associations Merge

The message of chiropractic unity seems to be gaining ground. Recently, the Colorado Chiropractic Association (CCA), Colorado Chiropractic Society (CCS) and Colorado Chiropractic Wellness Alliance (CCWA) agreed to merge, choosing to combine their resources and focus their collective energies on advancing the profession.

The Colorado Chiropractic Unity Committee, comprised of members of each of the three associations, was formed in November 2005 and tasked with the job of working to promote chiropractic harmony in the state. The committee moved quickly and held the first Colorado Unity Symposium in May 2006. Two months later, the committee forged an agreement, paving the way to work as one state association.

The unity committee will continue to work toward three basic goals: promoting the chiropractic profession to the public, enhancing the practice of the profession through legislation and education, and preserving patients’ rights. The details have yet to be worked out in terms of how the members of all three associations will merge and how nonmembers will be encouraged to join in the state’s chiropractic unity effort.

Will Virginia be next? Officers of the Virginia Chiropractic Association and the Virginia Society of Chiropractic held a second meeting in Richmond on June 24, 2006, following an initial meeting a few
months earlier. Meeting participants focused their discussion on the betterment of chiropractic in the state and offered open communication regarding what barriers are keeping the profession splintered throughout the state, and what can be done to lessen and remove those barriers. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Chris Frey, a general member of both organizations. Prior to their first meeting, both groups polled their membership to determine if there was statewide interest among the profession to see the organizations unified.

As a result of this second meeting, a task force has been formed, made up of several officers from both chiropractic organizations. The task force is charged with looking at the regulatory status of chiropractic in Virginia and attempting to lessen some of the barriers of unification that were identified during these first two meetings. The task force began initial conversations immediately and will continue to make periodic reports to each organization’s leadership.

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