



## ***NATIONAL HEALTH REFORM AND THE CHIROPRACTIC PROFESSION***

**Recognizing that an estimated 47 million Americans remain without health care coverage -- and that the continued rapidly rising cost of health care may cause millions of others to lose their existing health care benefits in the future, many policy-makers believe a newly-elected 111<sup>th</sup> Congress and White House, will take up the issue of "National Health Reform" as early as calendar year 2009.**

### ***A PARADIGM SHIFT IS NEEDED:***

No reform effort, no matter how well it is structured or funded, will succeed fully -- or achieve its maximum potential to benefit the American people, unless such effort is coupled with a broad transformational change -- a paradigm shift—away from the current health delivery system, which is largely oriented towards providing care for those who have already become seriously ill, to a more forward thinking and progressive system that has as its main focus comprehensive wellness care and disease prevention.

Given the high cost of providing health care generally, the undeniably high incidence of preventable disease that exists, coupled with America's rapidly aging population -- it is both logical and imperative that we move towards a "wellness" model of care as the primary and favored model of health care delivery as rapidly as possible.

### ***IMPORTANT FACTS:***

- Doctors of chiropractic are educated and trained to diagnose patients by taking a detailed medical history coupled with a physical exam and inspection. Doctors of chiropractic are educated in fully accredited colleges and universities in a post graduate environment, and receive the equivalent of a four-year clinical doctorate degree.
- It is estimated that doctors of chiropractic treat over 30 million people annually. Today, next to medical doctors and dentists, doctors of chiropractors comprise the largest number of doctorate level, portal-of-entry, primary-care providers in the nation.
- Doctors of chiropractic typically employ a holistic approach to the treatment of illness, with an appropriate emphasis on wellness concepts that involve diet, nutrition, exercise, and positive lifestyle changes.
- Doctors of chiropractic employ a non-surgical and non-pharmaceutical approach to health care that utilizes "spinal manipulation" to treat a range of neuro-musculoskeletal conditions. *(The range of conditions treated typically includes: back pain, neck pain, pain in the joints of the arms or legs, and headaches and other spinal-related maladies -- conditions that the vast majority of Americans will experience one or more times during their lives).*
- The cost to society of back pain alone is estimated to exceed \$50 billion dollars annually *(treatment, loss of productivity, etc).*
- Cost savings, including the avoidance of unnecessary surgeries and the reduced use of prescription medications, is one of the major benefits to the utilization of chiropractic care.

### ***Important Facts cont.***

- As chiropractic treatment does not involve the use of drugs or surgery, the treatment is not only cost-effective, but is also low-risk. Complications are rare and patient satisfaction with chiropractic care is typically higher than care being offered by other providers attempting to treat similar conditions by other means, such as “traditional” medical care.
- Doctors of chiropractic are licensed to practice in all fifty states, and in most states are allowed by law to use the term “physician” in describing their services. Doctors of chiropractic are considered physicians under Medicare.

### ***IMPORTANT POLICY IMPERATIVES:***

Decision makers with influence over the current and any future health delivery system should seek to fully integrate chiropractic care into a delivery system oriented towards wellness care, with the goal to fully exploit chiropractic’s potential to:

1. Save the system money by providing care that is often more cost-effective than traditional care offered;
2. Increase the quality of health care offered;
3. Improve patient outcomes and levels of patient satisfaction;
4. Expand patient treatment options and choice of provider;
5. Improve the overall health status and quality of life of the public by providing an effective, holistic wellness approach to health care;
6. Reduce medical errors and improve patient safety (*chiropractic care is inherently safer and less complicated in comparison to the use of surgical intervention, hospital stays, and the use of pharmaceuticals*);
7. Expand the nation’s capacity to deal with a major healthcare emergency.

In attempting to achieve the above, policy-makers should be careful to:

1. Avoid the preemption of state laws that help ensure a patient’s right to seek care from the provider of his or her choice, unless such laws are replaced by federal standards which are clearly superior.
2. Ensure that any federally defined package of “minimum benefits” that may be established specifically includes chiropractic care provided by doctors of chiropractic.
3. Adopt a comprehensive set of patient and provider protections (*Patients Bill of Rights provisions*) that will be made applicable to ERISA regulated plans.
4. Ensure that the availability of chiropractic is equal to the availability of traditional medical care in all federally established or regulated plans, including managed care plans, and that any discriminatory policies adverse to chiropractic patients and providers are eliminated.

### **For Additional Information Please Contact:**

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