



Eliminate Disparities in Veterans' Access to Chiropractic Care

BACKGROUND:

In recent years, after decades of inaction and neglect, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) finally began the long-overdue process of placing doctors of chiropractic (DCs) on staff at VA hospitals, in order to provide veterans with access to chiropractic care. The process of integrating chiropractic care in the VA system was initiated after Congress enacted a series of statutes, (Including PL 108-170 and PL 107-135) that included specific directives to hire doctors of chiropractic and place them at VA health care facilities. Although a chiropractic benefit has theoretically been available within the VA system for many years, Congress took action in this policy area when it became apparent that VA had failed to take any reasonable action to actually provide veterans with chiropractic care.

As a result of the above referenced congressional directives, including recommendations issued by a congressionally-mandated advisory committee, the VA currently provides chiropractic care (via hired or contracted staff) at 32 major VA treatment facilities within the U.S.

A MAJOR DISPARITY CONTINUES TO EXIST:

Despite the above progress, the overwhelming majority of America's eligible veterans continue to be denied access to chiropractic care, because the VA has failed to take any action to provide chiropractic care at approximately 120 additional major VA treatment facilities that comprise the major sites where VA care is offered.

IMPORTANT GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM DATA:

Shockingly, the above disparity has been allowed to continue, despite important data demonstrating a critical need within the VA for the specific type of health care doctors of chiropractic specialize in providing. Recent Department of Veterans Affairs data (*Analysis of VA Health Care Utilization Among U.S. Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) Veterans, January 2009*) cite "diseases of Musculoskeletal System/Connective System," such as back pain, as the **number one** ailment of Iraq/Afghanistan veterans accessing VA treatment.

ACTION NEEDED IN THE 111TH CONGRESS:

Urge the Members of the Senate and House committees on Veterans Affairs to enact legislation to extend the VA's chiropractic care program to all VA major medical facilities.

Specifically, House VA Committee Chairman Bob Filner has introduced HR 1017, the "Chiropractic Care Available to All Veterans Act," which aims to expand the number of chiropractic physicians at major VA medical centers. Members of the House are urged to contact Chairman Filner and cosponsor this legislation, HR 1017.

(over)

TALKING POINTS:

- **For too long, veterans have been denied access through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to the chiropractic care they want, need and deserve.**
- Recently, following enactment of specific legislative directives by Congress in 2002 and 2003 (*Public Laws 107-135 and 108-170*), the VA is beginning to make chiropractic care available at selected VA facilities around the country.
- Where implemented, the integration of chiropractic care into the VA has proved highly successful.
- Still, the chiropractic benefit is virtually non-existent at over 80% of VA major medical facilities.
- *Every* eligible veteran should have unimpeded access through the VA to chiropractic care.
- Although this is a step forward to improve the care available to America's veterans, many are unable to access chiropractic care at a VA facility unless the program is expanded.
- Musculoskeletal ailments (*principally joint and back disorders*) were the top health problem of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, according to a recent VA report (*Jan. 2009*).
- More needs to be done to overcome barriers to chiropractic care and ensure that doctors of chiropractic are integrated fully in federal health programs - like the VA health system - without any further delay.
- **Members of the House of Representatives should contact Rep. Filner's office and cosponsor HR 1017.**
- **Members of the U.S. Senate that wish to ensure access to chiropractic care should contact their colleagues serving on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and urge swift approval by the Senate of a provision identical to the House version of HR 1017.**

KEY MEMBERS:

Senate Veterans Affairs Committee

House Veterans Affairs Committee

For Additional Information Please Contact:

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