

The future is ours to create



Dr. Stan Gorchynski, DC, President

Imagine. That's what I've been doing as I look to the future of the chiropractic profession in Canada. Trying to imagine the shape of our changing health care system and our place in it. Trying to determine what we need to do today to ensure that our vision of tomorrow becomes a reality. To imagine is to create an image. Here is what mine looks like.

Looking outward, I envision a vibrant profession with strong inter-professional relationships and a voice at every policy table wherever it may be – be it with other professions, provincial and federal authorities, insurance

and labor officials, or within local municipal and community offices. A profession that truly places patients first and holds itself to the highest standards of public protection and education. I see a profession that is integrated into the health research community and which constantly evolves its clinical practices based on the best evidence. In my imagination, chiropractic care is the obvious first choice of Canadians and referring physicians for neuromusculoskeletal disorders. A profession recognized for its strong leadership in setting its own standards and benchmarks of clinical and ethical excellence.

Looking inward, my image is of a profession that collaborates internally to maximize the use of its resources and achieve the greatest benefit for all. A profession with high self-esteem and confidence, that sets its bar high, with enthusiastic support from each member. A profession that shakes off isolationist and defensive posturing and moves confidently and willingly forward by leaving the comfortable pathways of the past for the challenging, uncertain potential of the future. A profession with strong organizations and institutions, each with clear boundaries and responsibilities, each participating and contributing to the achievement of common goals through a unified vision.

“You may say I'm a dreamer” go the words to the popular John Lennon song, but “I'm not the only one.” Our profession has a great deal to offer the Canadian health care system as the winds of change move through our costly, but cherished, public plan. Times of change are also times of opportunity. What can we do as a profession to seize the opportunities that the evolution of the health system presents?

I suggest that first the chiropractic profession needs to strengthen its own house in order to best position the profession as a partner in the health care of Canadians. We need to minimize duplication of effort and maximize our ability to move forward purposefully with common goals

across all of our organizations. We need to find better ways of using the expertise within the profession in pursuit of a shared vision. We need each chiropractor to understand and to actively support a common strategy and share their organizations' unified vision.

The Canadian Chiropractic Association is currently consulting with all of its affiliated organizations in Canada to identify the best ways to move the profession forward and position it for the future. We are talking with each provincial association and regulatory college, with the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College, Université du Québec à Trois Rivières, the Canadian Federation of Chiropractic Regulatory Boards, the Council on Chiropractic Education Canada, the Canadian Chiropractic Protective Association, the Canadian Chiropractic Examining Board and the Canadian Chiropractic Research Foundation.

Together, we are looking at how we can improve federal-provincial government relations activities, further build our research base, strengthen our inter-professional relations, enhance our clinical and ethical excellence, and serve both the public interest and practitioners as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Change is the one constant in life: it is inevitable, and our profession must change to keep pace or it will be left behind. We cannot continue to do the same things in the same way if we want to achieve a stable, respected position in the healthcare system. There is enormous competition for Canada's limited health care resources. Both private and public payers are seeking ways to reduce costs while satisfying their clients – the Canadian public. We must consistently advocate the role that chiropractic care can play in relieving the burden on physicians, crowded emergency rooms, automobile personal injury, workers compensation boards, and the public purse.

We must ask ourselves, why do we not enjoy as favoured a position within health care as we would like? How has this reality come about and why do governments and other critical decision-makers not redress this situation? The conditions that have contributed to this situation are many and complex, however, the profession has the ability to address what it can to resolve this reality. I believe all of our various professional organizations, both national and provincial, have done an excellent job of fulfilling their mandates whether it is regulation, education, protection or promotion. But by working as a collection of

independent equals we have obviously gone as far as we can under these conditions. A lack of interactive partnering leads to conflict, then to stagnation. We are a small profession in a large and complex health care milieu. We must squeeze out every ounce of expertise and insight available to us in the pursuit of common goals and objectives. This can only happen through a much higher degree of collaboration across all of the organizations that act on behalf of the profession. We must move our organizational thinking beyond striving for competent and responsive management and administration of day-to-day matters. Our chiropractic organizations must collectively partner to determine the profession's future through collaborative consideration of all matters large and small. It is our joint responsibility to forge the goals and actions steps that will secure chiropractic's integration and partnership in the delivery of health care in Canada.

The CCA is fulfilling the role of catalyst to help facilitate a pan-Canadian dialogue on the profession's future. This process will tell us how we can more effectively marshal resources, share expertise and work together to seize the opportunities before us. I am confident that as the profession moves down this path, fresh ideas and directions will emerge that no single institution would develop or be able to implement on its own. We need creative, collaborative thinking to identify the best ways to address our credibility gaps so that chiropractic can move solidly into the integrated realm of customary and commonly accepted health care choices for Canadians.

The CCA Board of Governors has taken steps to reposition the profession in a manner that more accurately describes chiropractic today. I would encourage you to review the recently released "Position Statement on Chiropractic Within The Healthcare Framework" which states in part: "While chiropractic care has been considered Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM), the chiropractic profession in Canada today is best described as a regulated, primary health care profession with particular expertise in the care of the spine and extremity articulations."

This is just one small step toward educating perceptions of the profession and moving them forward to reflect today's reality. We will need to take many more steps to achieve a more valued position in Canada's health care culture. As we continue to develop a collaborative environment, here are some of the questions The

CCA is posing in its cross-country discussions. How can the profession fund and direct more research into key aspects of chiropractic care? How can we better serve the public interest to strengthen our credibility? How can we forge more formal relationships and affiliations with other health care institutions such as hospitals, and teaching institutions such as universities? What can we do to foster greater consistency in continuing education opportunities from coast to coast? What can we do to create clear public expectations of the profession that are reinforced by every patient encounter in each chiropractic office across Canada?

Big questions. And we are not alone in having to ask them. All health professionals are being challenged to both prove and deliver value as governments, private insurers and our patients struggle to manage a combination of rising costs and rising public expectations.

Chiropractic has made great strides. The profession's first new Clinical Practice Guideline in over a decade is published in the September issue of the JCCA and three additional guidelines are under development. We are establishing relationships with federal politicians. The profession's program of creating university-based research chairs is gaining momentum. The CCA has a seat at the table with important health coalitions such as the Health

Action Lobby (HEAL), and the Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century. These and similar activities are all building blocks for the future and we will continue to add to them brick by brick.

As we look to the future, it is equally important to celebrate our successes and take pride in the exemplary health care chiropractors provide to their patients. The national chiropractic convention being held in Vancouver in 2006 will be a tremendous opportunity to meet colleagues from across the country, to be inspired, to be educated, and to share in planning the future of the profession. Based on the theme, "Embracing the Future," this will be the first time since our centennial in 1995 that practitioners from coast-to-coast will have the opportunity to come together. I hope that I will see every one of you there.

Unlike mathematical equations, in our case, the sum is greater than its parts. When we combine The CCA's committed Board of Governors, its diligent Executive Officers, its excellent staff and a supportive membership, there is no reason that we cannot achieve whatever goal we set. I look forward to continue working with you as your president, and to move toward chiropractic's future with confidence and enthusiasm.

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