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The Chiropractic Regulatory Boards
and
Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Those of you who are among the initiate are privy to the fact that the fifty (50) chiropractic regulatory boards in these United States have been established by state legislation for the purpose of bringing professional governance to the chiropractic profession " ... for the protection and welfare of their patients." These boards, as you know, are specifically empowered by law to assess through education, examination and experience leading to licensure the qualifications of those desiring to administer chiropractic care within their particular jurisdictions, and to monitor the way chiropractic care is administered, and to investigate and prosecute those practitioners who violate established standards of conduct. Simply and specifically put, the parameters of the chiropractic regulatory boards lie within the areas of licensure (the granting of applications to the qualified; the issuing of licenses to those passing the examination(s) written and/or approved by them) and practice, and discipline.

As regulatory board members, you more than understand that boards must respond to many areas of the profession's concern, some of which are: professional education program reviews; credentialing; review of applications for licensure and candidate experience; professional practice; regulations and standards; professional discipline; relations with the profession; comments on pending legislation; communication and public information; policy recommendations.

As a regulatory board member, though a public one, I have, of course, been made aware of the work boards do. I do understand that boards are most connected with individuals who are caught up in the health care system. Board members see people with immediate and measurable injuries, with quantifiable financial disputes, with specific problems about tests and licenses, not to mention defending the profession against scope encroachment by other licensed professions. Board members live in a pretty "cut-and-dried world," as one board member put it. With this kind of "practical agenda," one that deals with the "nuts-and-bolts" of professional practice, and one that they must contend with on a daily basis, one can begin to almost understand how the issue of diversity can appear at a level of abstraction that most staff don't deal with or even think about.

Despite my awareness and understanding of the many facets involved in the activities of regulatory board members, I must unequivocally state that the diversity issue brings sharp fo-

cus to the mission of the FCLB as it relates to minority issues, the mission that was approved at the 1998 conference in San Diego by the attending delegates from the regulatory boards.

The population of the United States has been projected to become 277,000,000 in the year 2000, our present year. Of this projected number, 25% will be from minority populations - American Indian, Native Alaskan, Asian, Pacific Islander, Filipino, Hispanic, Black - approximately 68,000,000 of this 271,000,000. It has been stated that although all population groups (including White) will show an increase, the Hispanic and Asian groups will account for the greatest increase. The chiropractic profession needs to adopt and deal with minority issues through inclusionary efforts in all states with or without sizable racial and ethnic minorities, if it is to survive in this changing racial and ethnic demographic. As our United States becomes more diverse, it becomes of critical importance to put in place structures which will serve the public in all its shades and hues.

Under my watch as Chair of the Committee on Minority (Diversity) Issues, the Committee looked to the regulatory boards to enlighten it on the racial/ethnic diversity of applicants for licensure, the racial/ethnic diversity of licensees, the racial/ethnic diversity of those about whom complaints of misconduct had been filed, and the racial/ethnic diversity comparison of disciplinary actions meted out. The tabulation of the results of the Power Poll in which these questions were posed are to be found among the spate of information members received in preparation for this conference. Suffice it to say that the overriding response came through loud and clear: the vast majority of boards do not track racial/ethnic diversity at any point in the licensure, practice, or discipline process. The question is, if regulatory boards have signed off on the issue of diversity, how will they go about fulfilling this commitment if they do not know the population demographics in their own jurisdictions?

During the Committee's meeting at this conference, it will look "toward affirming some core values, norms, and principles" to serve as guidelines "in fairness, balance and due process" that should make the work of the regulatory boards more "open and just" as members, hopefully, come to grips with the impact of diversity in their respective jurisdictions.

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