

## E Pluribus Unum

For most of its existence our profession has been bedevilled by the blurred edges of identity, with philosophical, educational, ethical and scope-of-practice issues being the most highly contentious areas of disagreement. The resulting disunity that has characterised a lot of our history has held the profession back by diffusing our resources and undermining our ability to consult productively with government, institutions and other health care professions.

Two-and-a-half years ago the World Federation of Chiropractic tackled this problem head-on at its 2003 World Congress in Orlando, Florida, which included a panel discussion on whether an international conference on identity should be called. By year's end, a Task Force was appointed which represented 14 countries (United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Namibia, Singapore, Bolivia, Cyprus and Switzerland), and comprised 34 chiropractors, 1 chiropractic student and 5 laypeople. Documents were circulated to members of the Task Force and their input sought leading up to the first international consultation hosted by Life Chiropractic College-West on their San Francisco-area campus in February 2004. One of us (MAC) was privileged to attend as one of about 20 observers. After lengthy discussions on the profession's notions about identity and public perceptions of chiropractic based on a recent Canadian survey and other evidence, the Task Force focussed on its primary task: reaching consensus on questions to be included in a worldwide survey of the profession. Over the ensuing weeks, social scientists structured the resulting document to ensure that the survey instrument would accurately reflect participating chiropractors' values and opinions.

After the survey results had been tabulated and analysed, the Task Force met again to finalise recommendations on the most appropriate public identity for the chiropractic profession worldwide. These recommendations were unanimously approved by the WFC Assembly when more than 100 delegates and observers from national associations in 36 countries gathered in Sydney on 15 June.

At the end of July the World Federation of Chiropractic began promulgating the statement:

1. **International Identity.** The public identity of the chiropractic profession, if it is to be effective and successful, should be similar in all countries.
2. **Three Concepts.** This identity should be established and maintained through the following three concepts:
  - a. A leading statement on identity, which must be clear, concise and immediately relevant to both the public and the profession—the 'pole' (brand platform).

- b. Several important qualifying statements, which provide the necessary context and foundation for the pole—the 'ground' (brand pillars).
- c. A description of the qualities or essential personality of chiropractors—the 'personality' (tone).

3. **The Pole.** The pole should be: The spinal health care experts in the health care system.

4. **The Ground.** The ground should be:

- a. Ability to improve function in the neuromusculoskeletal system, and overall health, wellbeing and quality of life.
- b. Specialised approach to examination, diagnosis and treatment, based on best available research and clinical evidence, and with particular emphasis on the relationship between the spine and the nervous system.
- c. Tradition of effectiveness and patient satisfaction.
- d. Without use of drugs and surgery, enabling patients to avoid these where possible.
- e. Expertly qualified providers of spinal adjustment, manipulation and other manual treatments, exercise instruction and patient education.
- f. Collaboration with other health professionals.
- g. A patient-centred and biopsychosocial approach, emphasising the mind/body relationship in health, the self-healing powers of the individual, individual responsibility for health, and encouraging patient independence.

5. **The Personality.** The personality should be a combination of:

- a. Expert, professional, ethical, knowledgeable; and
- b. Accessible, caring, human, positive.

Thanks to the vision of the World Federation, the support of its member associations, the dedication and perspicacity of the Identity Task Force and the participation of thousands of practitioners around the world who cared enough to complete the survey, we now have a powerful tool in our hands to keep our profession united and focussed on positive development, to provide clear and accurate information to the public on the role and status of chiropractors in the health care system, to inform dialogue with other health care professions, and to speak with one voice in our dealings with governments all over the world.

Mary Ann Chance, DC, FICC  
Rolf E. Peters, MSc. DC, FICC