

Chapter Outline

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I. OVERVIEW

The chiropractic profession has evolved and continues to develop within a similar dynamic process as have other professions. Research in the areas of professional education and continuing education has delineated characteristics of professionalism. These characteristics focus upon the central themes of education, credentialing, professional organizations, ethical considerations and legal reinforcement. Each characteristic speaks to the dynamic development of a profession as it moves toward greater organization, influence, and responsibility to the public that it serves.

This chapter will relate these common characteristics of professionalism to the chiropractic profession and will present models to be used for future development.

II. LIST OF SUBTOPICS

- A. Continuing Education

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature search was conducted through primary sources, printed indexes, computerized bibliographic databases and in a library card catalog. Printed indexes searched included the Index to Chiropractic Literature 1980-1990, the Chiropractic Literature Index 1970-1979, and the Chiropractic Research Archives Collection (Vols 1-3). The computerized database searched was Medline, the National Library of Medicine's current medical literature database. Finally, searches for relevant materials were conducted in the card catalog of the David D. Palmer Health Sciences Library.

Both specific thesaurus terms and "keyword" terms were searched in these resources. A sampling of thesaurus, keyword terms and concepts searched included: professional development; continuing education; credentialing; continuing competency; life-long learning programs; diplomate/specialization programs; certification programs; extern programs; preceptorship; residency programs; performance measurement; licensure; licensure and reciprocity; professional associations; ethics and advertising; social responsibility; professional responsibility; peer review; information literacy.

- A. Chiropractic Education

The doctor of chiropractic is educated in the basic and clinical sciences as well as in related health subjects. Chiropractic science concerns itself with the relationship between structure (primarily the spine) and function (primarily the nervous system) as that relationship may affect the restoration and preservation of health. The purpose of chiropractic professional education is to prepare the doctor of chiropractic to serve as a primary care, portal of entry practitioner into the health care delivery system. He/she must be well educated to evaluate the patient, to provide care, and to consult with or refer to other health care providers.

All applicants to chiropractic colleges must have successfully completed a minimum of 60 semester hours, or equivalent, of college credits from a nationally recognized accrediting body.

The Council of Chiropractic Education, the national accrediting agency for chiropractic colleges recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for this purpose, produces a standards document specifying requirements for chiropractic educational institutions and programs. However, there is no CCE standard regarding residency or specialty programs. At present, criteria governing postgraduate educational programs are at the discretion of the respective colleges. Numerous national

organizations have established chiropractic specialty councils with specific guidelines and requirements determination by those organizations.

The needs of society require that chiropractic practitioners be able to carry out their duties according to the highest possible standards of character, competence and practice. Chiropractic is a philosophy, science, and art based on the application of a complex body of scientific knowledge. Competence in solving problems, capacity to use complex knowledge and a sensitive awareness of ethical problems are related to the entire lifelong learning process of the individual practitioner.

B. Credentialing

Credentialing is a formal means by which the capabilities of the individual practitioner to perform duties at an acceptable level are recognized. The major instrument for licensure within the chiropractic profession is the state government which fulfills this function with guidance from the profession in setting examination policies and testing the applicants.

In all states an applicant for license to practice must supply evidence of successful completion of an approved program of chiropractic education leading to the doctor of chiropractic degree, and proficiency by passing required examinations to demonstrate mastery of basic and practical elements of chiropractic as defined in that state.

National testing for the profession is conducted by the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners. The National Board examinations address basic and clinical sciences. The examination scores are recognized by all states in partial fulfillment of licensure requirements. A subsequent component of licensure is continuing education. The purpose of continuing professional education is to update theoretical knowledge, technique skills and clinical applications. To be effective continuing education should enhance successful clinical performance of practitioners. In addition, continuing education must be truly "continuing," not sporadic or opportunistic, and must be self-directed, with each professional being the ultimate monitor of his or her own learning. The ultimate test of a continuing education program is in the improvement of clinical outcomes and thus the quality of service.

Currently many states require evidence of board-approved continuing education for license renewal. This requirement may range from 24 to 40 hours every two years with some states requiring specific areas of focus for credit hours. While it is recognized that mandatory continuing education requirement for license renewal does not equate with continuing competency, it is the consensus of licensing boards that practitioners need to remain knowledgeable and maintain skills current with standards within the profession.

Postgraduate continuing education is offered in many fields including, including but not limited to, chiropractic neurology, adjustive techniques, pediatrics, fitness and sports injuries, nutrition, and occupational health. These courses are taught and monitored by chiropractic educational institutions and have specific requirements for practitioners to meet board certification status. However, postgraduate specialty programs and credentialing requires individual evaluation with respect to reliability, standardization of education, and its implication regarding quality of care.

C. Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles in chiropractic care focus on patient rights. A code of ethics addresses the professional principles each practitioner should adopt in all interactions with patients, the public, and other practitioners. The International Chiropractors Association has adopted a code of professional ethics that is made available to every member and may be easily referenced by non-members and the general public. ICA holds that ethical professional conduct is an essential component of quality

- Evidence: Class I, II, III
3. Completion of mandatory continuing education requirements for license renewal does not necessarily assure continuing competency. Those requirements should include assessment of outcomes by administering institutions/organizations to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs.
- 14.1.3 **Rating:** Recommended
Evidence: Class I, II, III
4. Continuing education should allow for a variety of instructional formats.
- 14.1.4 **Rating:** Recommended
Evidence: Class II, III
5. Practitioners should continue to educate themselves through critical reading and review of clinical and/or scientific literature.
- 14.1.5 **Rating:** Recommended
Evidence: Class II, III

B. Postgraduate Education

1. All chiropractic colleges are encouraged to provide residency programs for qualified graduates for the purpose of advanced research, education and clinical practice.
- 14.2.1 **Rating:** Recommended
Evidence: Class II, III
2. Colleges should provide opportunities for postgraduate programs for professional development which may lead to certification or specialty status.
- 14.2.2 **Rating:** Recommended
Evidence: Class II, III
3. Practitioners are encouraged to participate in certification or specialty postgraduate education programs (e.g., specialty programs).
- 14.2.3 **Rating:** Discretionary
Evidence: Class II, III
4. Proprietary programs should affiliate with accredited educational institutions for the purposes of development, evaluation and implementation.
- 14.2.5 **Rating:** Recommended
Evidence: Class II, III

C. Graduate Education

1. Practitioners are encouraged to participate in programs providing graduate education (e.g., masters or doctorate) offered by accredited educational institutions.
- 14.3.1 **Rating:** Discretionary

Evidence: Class II, III

D. Professional Organizations

1. Practitioners should be members of one or more professional associations.

14.4.1 **Rating:** Recommended
Evidence: Class II, III

Comment: Professional organizations and associations provide a structure of responsibility through which members develop and maintain awareness of professional developments and gain enhanced professional competence. Practitioners also develop leadership abilities by participating in sponsored conventions, conferences, workshops and other gatherings; receive publications pertinent to the profession; support and encourage legislative programs and otherwise influence public policy in the interests of the public and the profession.

E. Ethics/Standards of Conduct

1. Practitioners should conduct themselves in a manner consistent with a professional code of ethics which addresses morality, honesty and all aspects of professional conduct.

14.5.1 **Rating:** Necessary
Evidence: Class I, II, III

2. Practitioners who advertise should do so in a lawful manner.

14.5.2 **Rating:** Necessary
Evidence: Class I, II, III

Comment: The responsibility for regulation of advertising lies with professional associations and licensing boards. Professional organizations can assist by enforcing guidelines established for the membership; the state licensing boards promulgate rules to aid the profession and safeguard the public. Violation of state or provincial laws can result in fines or suspension or revocation of a license.

F. Research

1. Practitioners are encouraged to participate in research and support institutions/organizations conducting research for the purpose of professional development and improved patient care. Valid research requires appropriate research protocols as approved by recognized institutional review boards.

14.6.1 **Rating:** Recommended
Evidence: Class II, III

V. REFERENCES

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