



The International Chiropractors Association

April 29, 2019

Dr. Laurie Tassell
President, World Federation of Chiropractic
160 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 601
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4P 3B5

Dear Dr. Tassell:

In 2005, I attended my first meeting as a delegate to the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC) Assembly and Congress in Sydney, Australia. I was honored to have had the opportunity to second the motion to submit the results of the WFC Identity Task Force to the full WFC Assembly Body for ratification. My participation in that meeting, as well as in subsequent meetings in Vilamoura, Montreal, and Rio De Janeiro, solidified my understanding and appreciation for the excellent work done by the WFC in advancing the interests of the chiropractic profession around the world.

It is with a heavy heart, that my very first official communication as the new President of the International Chiropractors Association (ICA) must be one submitting an official complaint against two members of the WFC Research Council and a fellow WFC member association. By unanimous agreement of the Board of Directors, the International Chiropractors Association, as a WFC member in good standing, hereby, formally requests the following actions be taken:

1. The current Chair of the WFC Research Council be immediately removed from his current position and denied future participation in any activities on behalf of the WFC.
2. An additional member of the WFC Research Council be publicly reprimanded and sanctioned and prohibited from the opportunity to serve in any leadership role at the WFC for at least 5 years.
3. That the sponsoring organization that coordinated, reviewed and permitted the alleged questionable presentations be sanctioned for conduct not reflecting the professional, inclusive and collegial respect for the values embedded in the WFC Strategic Plan, Governing Documents and the WFC Official Policy Statements.

Absent any clearly defined complaint procedures, I have chosen to communicate via this letter and the attached document that outlines the WFC policies that have been breached and the rationale for the requested actions outlined above. Although I was not personally at the Berlin event, I have received numerous reports from ICA delegates



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in attendance, and additional information from several credible witnesses.

It is my sincerest hope that the controversy surrounding the chiropractic shot heard around the world can be dealt with quickly and professionally and that the unfortunate attempts to unnecessarily divide our profession can become a wakeup call to the WFC Council.

The ICA appreciates the opportunity to work cooperatively in collaboration with all chiropractic national associations. The ICA also recognizes that all national associations have the right to publicly promote the positive attributes of the practice of chiropractic in their respective jurisdictions. The ICA however, on behalf of its membership worldwide, will not ignore the lack of tolerance and the level of disrespect that was on display in Berlin. It is my sincerest hope that the WFC Council will objectively assess the situation and take swift and deliberate action.

Sincerely,

Stephen P. Welsh, DC
President
International Chiropractors Association

cc: Dr. Brown
WFC Councilors
By e-mail

Enclosure



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ICA Complaints to the World Federation of Chiropractic

PREFACE

The primary purpose of submitting the following complaints is to address several violations of the WFC ***“Principles of governance for WFC office holders”*** by two members of the WFC Research Council. It is indeed unfortunate that the behavior of two individuals call into question their ability to serve the WFC in a manner consistent with the Goals, Objectives and Policies of the WFC. It is the position of the ICA that it is not sufficient to just articulate a set of principles but rather it is necessary to enforce them when they are violated in a public forum.

The Case to Support the ICA Recommendations

The Premise

The first issue that is usually raised when individuals act in a manner that contradicts the official position of an organization in which they are a member is that of free speech. The premise is that each individual has the right to express his or her own personal opinion and to make personal recommendations regarding any issue at hand. A leader in an organization, however, has a higher level of responsibility. The alternative premise is that an individual in a position of authority in an organization cannot abuse that position by using it to advance a personal agenda, at the expense of other members of the organization in which they serve. The WFC has adopted a set of principles that address this issue. It is the opinion of the ICA that those principles have been violated. I present them below as a reminder to the Council.

“The following principles of governance are modelled on the Nolan Principles (1995), which formed the basis for conduct and behaviour in public life.

The WFC has adopted these principles as standards for serving Executive and Council members and those appointed to serve on WFC committees.

Selflessness

Notwithstanding those duties to the regions that have appointed WFC Council members, those appointed to serve in office should act principally in the interests of the WFC and its country members.

Objectivity

Those appointed to serve in office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. Accountability
Those appointed to serve in office are accountable to the organisation and its country



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members for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Leadership

Those appointed to serve in office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour whenever it occurs. *

*Excerpts from Principles of governance for WFC office holders Adopted by WFC Council: September 2015

Basis for ICA Recommendation Number 1: Chair of WFC Research Council

Primary Complaint: It is the assertion of the ICA that the inappropriate and offensive comments delivered on stage would not be tolerated by any respected professional organization in any field of endeavor. This behavior was a blatant violation of the WFC ***“Principles of governance for WFC office holders”*** that applies to all committee members.

The criticism of bringing a child to a vitalistic chiropractor followed by the invoking of a reference to a Catholic priest at a children’s school was so offensive, to so many people, that this behavior alone should be sufficient to immediately take the action recommended by the ICA. The demonstrated religious intolerance and blatant offensive behavior on a public stage speaks for itself. This behavior cannot be excused under any circumstances.

Additional Complaints:

It is the assertion of the ICA that the recently published paper entitled “Chiropractic, one big unhappy family: better together or apart” is an opinion piece whose theme is both divisive and in contradiction to the principles of the WFC. The utilization of the WFC platform to promote the divisive political agenda expressed in this paper is a violation of the WFC principles of governance.

It is the assertion of the ICA that certain elements of the document known as the ICEC Agreement include inferences that are misleading, divisive and appear to have been created to advance a political agenda. The use of the phrase *“This document is based upon and supports the theme of the World Federation of Chiropractic Educational Statement formulated in November 2014 at the Miami Education Conference”* also inappropriately implies an endorsement of the WFC for the positions expressed. Once again, the utilization of the WFC platform to promote the divisive political agenda expressed in this document is a violation of the WFC principles of governance.



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Basis for ICA Recommendation Number 2: The other member of the research committee and co-author of the recently published “chiropractic divorce” paper.

Complaint:

The cheap shot directed at an ICA affiliated educational institution during a presentation is not the issue of concern. It was the remark that “... they have long advocated for the continued necessity of radiographs for the purpose of **identifying vertebral subluxations, or whatever they imagine they are treating...**” that is of the greatest cause of concern. This direct insult to all chiropractors that focus on the correction of the subluxation is in direct contradiction to the guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO). Please note that the WHO Definition of Chiropractic is as follows:

*“A health care profession concerned with the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disorders of the **neuromusculoskeletal** system and **the effects of these disorders on general health**. There is an emphasis on manual techniques, including joint adjustment and/or manipulation **with a particular focus on subluxations**.”*

The public display of intolerance and the initiation of a campaign against the chiropractors who adhere to the WHO guidelines on subluxations is unacceptable and any continuation of this behavior threatens to put our relationship with the WHO at risk.

It is this anti-subluxation attitude, put on public display on the world stage that undermines the profession globally and forms the basis of ICA’s second complaint. Once again, the utilization of the WFC platform to promote the divisive political agenda expressed in this document is also a violation of the WFC principles of governance.

Basis for ICA Recommendation Number 3: The association co-sponsoring the WFC Congress

Complaint:

The third complaint is one that is less obvious but is the one of greatest concern to the ICA. The orchestrated, planned, public display of disrespect demonstrated by throwing empty water bottles during a presentation followed by audience applause is indicative of an apparent, negative bias that has been cultivated by the leadership of the sponsoring association over a period of time that may now permeate that association’s membership.



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It is this demonstration of disrespect for members of other national associations that, if left unchecked, threatens the cordial collaboration that is so necessary if we as a profession are going to succeed in bringing to the world the benefits that are so desperately needed.

The International Chiropractors Association (ICA), founded by the son of the “Father” of our great profession, has been serving the practicing DCs around the world for over 93 years. The ICA does not intend to stand by and allow a small group of researchers and academics to hijack our great profession under the banner of ‘evidence-based practice’ when they continue to turn a blind eye to the evidence that is seen on a day to day basis by over 100,000 chiropractors world-wide.

The ICA supports the World Federation endorsement of an evidence-based, patient-centered, interprofessional and collaborative approach in chiropractic. The suggestion, however, that the practice of vitalistic, subluxation-oriented chiropractic is unscientific and not evidenced-based is a false premise that must be immediately renounced by the WFC on behalf of many of its member national associations.

The ICA asserts that the model of practice chosen by the individual chiropractic practitioner, academic or researcher does not negate the validity of the model chosen by their colleagues. The underlying foundational principles of the WFC include an acknowledgement and respect for the variations that exist between international jurisdictions. The ICA objects to the apparent willingness of the WFC Council to allow individuals to use their positions at the WFC to advance a political agenda at the expense of other member associations. Now is the time for the WFC Council to practice what they preach. Either take appropriate action and deliver a message to the Chiropractic community world-wide that the WFC stands with chiropractors of all philosophies or take no action and deliver a different message to that same community. The underpinnings of the WFC itself are at risk if council members politicize the research committee through attacks and discriminatory ridiculing against those who have differing opinions. ICA will not stand silent to such attacks and discrimination.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen P. Welsh, DC, FICA
President, International Chiropractors Association