

Update 64

As a member of the WFC's task force on Professional Identity, I recently had the opportunity to participate in the 2nd meeting of that task force which took place across 3 days at Life Chiropractic College West (LCCW). At that meeting the results of the survey, which had been carried out in October of 2004, were unveiled to the members of the task force. The following is a basic summary of the findings. If you would like to examine the complete report of the results they can be accessed by going to the WFC website (www.wfc.org) and, after choosing the language of your preference, clicking on Identity Conference.

WFC IDENTITY SURVEY SUMMARY

In February, 2004 the 40 members of the WFC Professional Identity task force met at LCCW for 3 days in order to construct a survey instrument (questionnaire). The objective of this survey was to gather data related to the attitudes and perceptions of chiropractors towards the profession. The results of the survey are being used to help define the organization's (WFC's) positioning strategy. The survey was distributed to almost 30,000 chiropractors world-wide (n=29,094). Three thousand six hundred and eighty nine (3689) responses were received. By all accounts such a response rate is very good for a survey of this nature. For example, the response rate gives the survey results accuracy within a statistical tolerance level of +/- 1.6%, 19 times out of 20. We, the task force members, were informed by the research company (Northstar Research Partners), that the results were weighted so as to reflect the true distribution of chiropractors in the participating countries. Below I have briefly summarised the main survey findings.

From the 20th to the 22nd of January, 2005, we, the task force members again met at LCCW. This time we were presented with the survey results and, based on the results, and the results of a number of other surveys and studies which have explored public perceptions and trends in health care, we were asked to formulate a professional identity for the global chiropractic community. At this point I am unable to inform you of the results of the latest meeting. Those results will be made public at a presentation during the WFC's 8th Biennial Congress in Sydney Australia June 16-18, 2005 (www.wfc.org/congress2005) .

Consultation on Identity - Quantitative Research Findings

It is important for the profession to have a clear public identity

90% strongly agree

The chiropractic profession has a clear identity

4% strongly agree

40% strongly disagree

Area of central importance in practice and public identity

The *nervous system* is of central importance to the *practice of chiropractic*

85% agree

The *spine* is of central importance to the *practice of chiropractic*

72% agree

The *spine* is of central importance to the *public identity of chiropractic*

66% agree

The *nervous system* is of central importance to the *public identity of chiropractic*

60% agree

When communicating with the general public to promote the use of chiropractic services, which view do you think should receive more emphasis?

<i>General public's</i> view of the profession	25%
<i>Chiropractics'</i> view of the profession	21%
<i>Both views</i> are equally important	54%

How *should* the profession be perceived by the *public*? (Focused, Broad, Specialist)

Focused scope	55%
Broad scope	36%
Specialist care	9%

How is the profession *currently* perceived by the *public*? (Focused, Broad, Specialist)

Focused scope	41%
Broad scope	3%
Specialist care	30%

How *should* the profession be perceived by the *public*? (CAM, Mainstream)

CAM	12%
Mainstream	88%

How is the profession *currently* perceived by the *public*? (CAM, Mainstream)

CAM	89%
Mainstream	11%

Agreement with Policy Opposing use of Prescription Drugs

The majority (**62%**) strongly support the policy opposing the use of prescription drugs in the practice of chiropractic. Only **9%** strongly disagree with the policy. When the results from Europe are broken down into Regulated and Unregulated European countries, **79%** of chiropractors from regulated European countries strongly or somewhat agreed with the policy, while **90%** of chiropractors from unregulated European countries agreed with the policy.

In fact, the non-drug, non-surgical mandate of chiropractic is viewed as being 'cornerstone' to the profession's identity.

How SHOULD the profession be perceived by the general public?

Wellness care	83%
Non-drug/Non-surgical	82%
Management of spinal problems and their impact on general health	75%
Management of NMS conditions and their impact on general health	72%
Primary health care	67%
Management of vertebral subluxation and their impact on general health	65%
Management of back and neck pain and their impact on general health	60%
Management of NMS conditions	60%
Management of spinal problems	60%
Management of vertebral subluxation	56%
Management of back and neck pain	47%

How IS the profession perceived by the general public?

Wellness care	6%
Non-drug/Non-surgical	45%
Management of spinal problems and their impact on general health	17%
Management of NMS conditions and their impact on general health	13%
Primary health care	2%
Management of vertebral subluxation and their impact on general health	5%
Management of back and neck pain and their impact on general health	30%
Management of NMS conditions	38%
Management of spinal problems	60%
Management of vertebral subluxation	9%
Management of back and neck pain	81%

Chiropractor's views on Factors that Influence Public Perception

Ability to get patient back to work/daily activities	84%
Patient-cantered care	84%
Spinal care expertise	77%
Issues of trust, ethics and professional behavior	77%
Hands-on care	76%
Quick recovery from pain and disability	75%
Ability to manage pain	72%
Ability to manage back pain	71%
Ability to diagnose cause of symptoms	68%
Level of education/training	68%
No drugs or surgery	65%
Attitudes of the media	62%
Preventative care	59%
The profession's different model of health	59%
Attitudes of government and health authorities	58%
Third party funding for care	55%
Attitudes of other health care professionals	54%

Summary - From the chiropractor's perspective, the ability to get a patient back to their regular routine and the fact that chiropractic health care delivers patient-cantered care and spinal care expertise are key in helping shape the general public's perception of the profession. Additionally, issues of ethics, behaviour and trust play an important role in influencing public opinion.

Professional Conduct and Standards

There is consensus among chiropractors that public confidence has been impacted by newsworthy events that have called into question the conduct of some members of the profession. Most also believe that the public is not aware of the level of education of chiropractors.

Chiropractor's perceptions of the factors influencing a patient's decision to seek Chiropractic Care

Reputation for effectiveness	87%
Manual procedures	74%
Specialized knowledge/education	67%
Non-drug/non-surgical	62%
Availability of third party funding	58%
Diagnostic ability	55%
Exercise/rehabilitation	38%
Lifestyle counselling/advice	36%
Nutritional support/advice	27%
