

# 20 PRINCIPLES

Advancing awareness, utilization and integration of chiropractic internationally

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# Introduction

For over 30 years, the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC) has been at the forefront of the global development of chiropractic.

Representing the interests of the profession in over 90 countries worldwide, the WFC defends, promotes and advocates for the profession across its 7 world regions.

The publication of the WFC's 20 Principles set out the guiding values that drive our work.

Our Strategic Plan 2019-2022, approved unanimously at the 2019 WFC Assembly of Members in Berlin, sets out four key pillars: support, empowerment, promotion and advancement. In achieving our goals, we are aware of the diversity of ways in which chiropractors serve their patients, which is often driven by social determinants of health, culture and philosophy of healthcare delivery. The plan is the product of a careful analysis of our

strengths and priorities and a desire to ensure that it has relevance and meaning to our members and stakeholders.

These 20 Principles explain what we stand for. They articulate our commitment to advance and develop the chiropractic profession for the benefit of patients and the public and to represent the interests of our national association members around the world.

As a living document, the WFC 20 Principles will be regularly reviewed and, where necessary, updated. We hope that they will be received in the spirit in which they are intended and serve to provide clarity as to our purpose, support to the profession, and empowerment to many thousands of chiropractors whose dedication and commitment is transforming the lives of people around the world.





# 1

We envision a world where all people, of all ages, in all nations, can access the benefits of chiropractic.

Chiropractic is a profession whose members bring relief to millions around the world each year. For the past 128 years, doctors of chiropractic have faithfully served their communities, bringing relief to suffering and improving the quality of life of those whose lives have been affected by pain and disability.

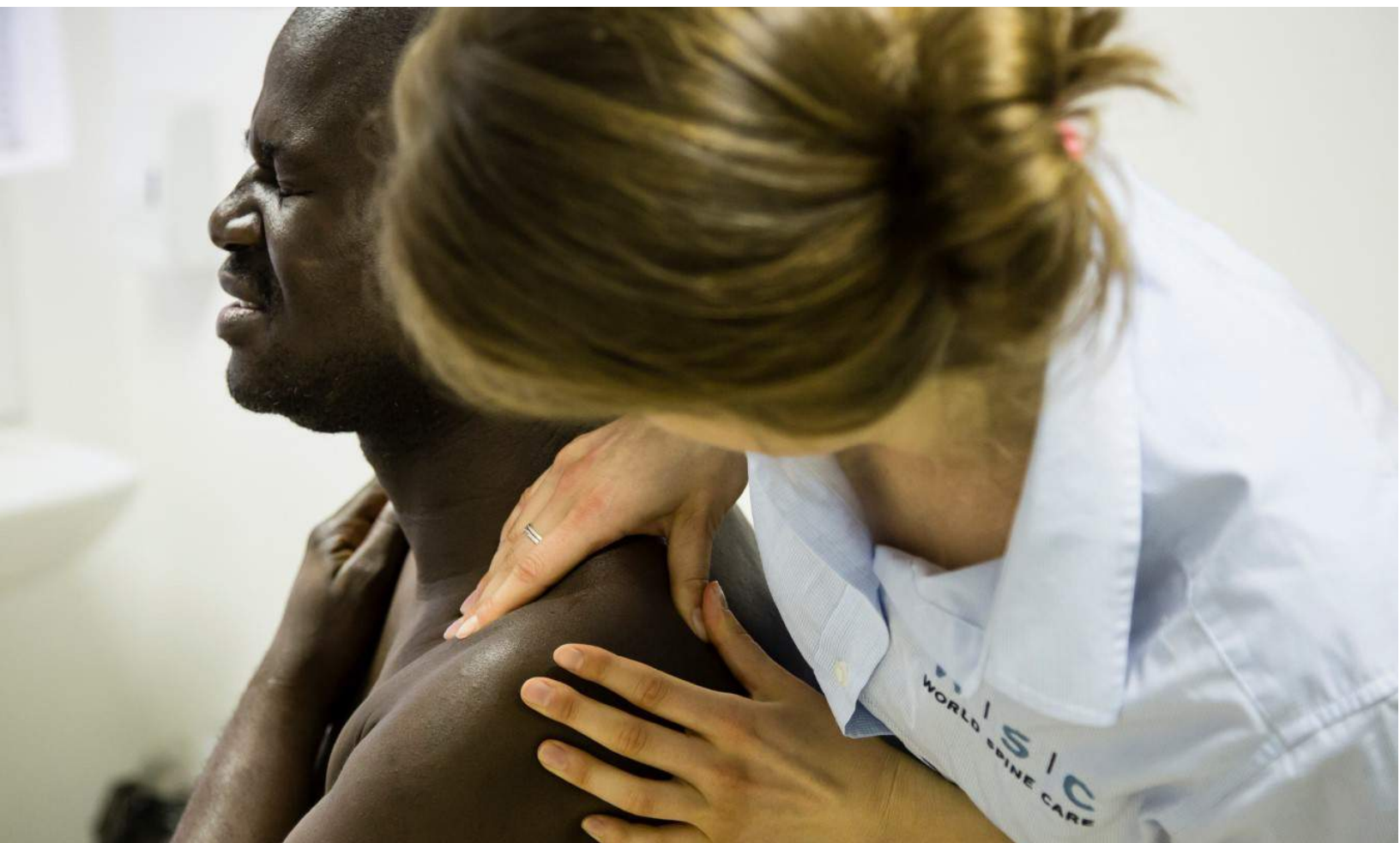
Chiropractic is present in over 100 nations, yet there remains many people who, because of social, economic, environmental or political reasons, are unable to access care.

Our vision is that regardless of geographic location or financial circumstances, all people, throughout the life course, may enjoy access to

chiropractic. We consider that such access should be a right, not a privilege and that it should be available to the many, not to the few.

In their offices and clinics around the world, chiropractors see patients of all ages, from newborns to the elderly. The widespread popularity of pediatric chiropractic care, reflected in public surveys, suggests that it is highly valued by parents, while chiropractic-led programs to support the elderly have transformed the lives of those hampered by mobility issues.

Around the world, chiropractors are changing lives for the better.



# 2

## We are driven by our mission to advance awareness, utilization and integration of chiropractic internationally.

There are currently an estimated 120,000 chiropractors in the world. Around seventy per cent practice in North America, with a significant majority licensed in the United States.

In many parts of the world, particularly in Africa and Asia, there are very few chiropractors and access to care is limited. Because of low numbers in these regions, people are unaware of the benefits of chiropractic care.

As a global organization, we are committed to advancing awareness of chiropractic, including the education and training of chiropractors, their scope of practice, and their expertise in managing neuromusculoskeletal disorders.

We advocate for the greater utilization of chiropractic within national, state and provincial health systems. With low back pain alone constituting the leading cause of years lived with disability worldwide, there is a clearly identified need for the services that can be provided by doctors of chiropractic.

We are supportive of the drive to eliminate silos in health care and believe in the value of integration of chiropractic services as part of a multidisciplinary approach. We are mindful that collaboration can occur regardless of a chiropractor's individual practice circumstances.





# 3

## We believe that science and research should inform care and policy decisions and support calls for wider access to chiropractic.

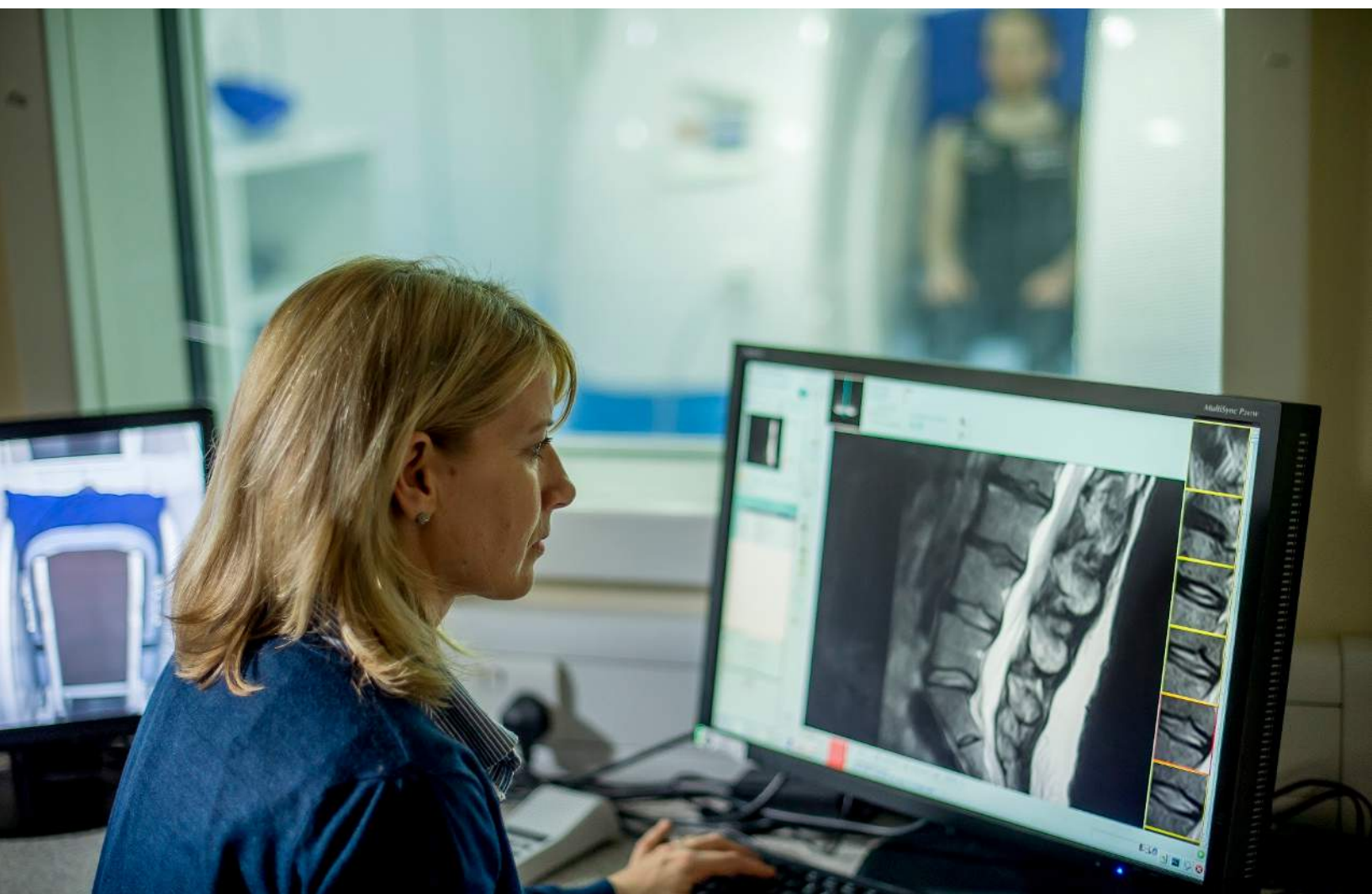
Evidence supports the role of chiropractors in the effective management of spinal pain and disability. With international guidelines now advocating for non-surgical, non-pharmaceutical approaches to most forms of back pain, chiropractors are well-placed to take their place as valued members of people's health care teams.

We support evidence-based approaches to chiropractic care, informed by the best available scientific research. Current scientific evidence favors many care interventions used by chiropractors, including those following a biopsychosocial model.

Health policy to address the global burden of spinal pain and disability must also be founded on an analysis of the evidence and be created in consultation with all spine care professionals, including chiropractors.

Our vision is a world where all people, of all ages, in all nations may access chiropractic so that populations may thrive and reach their full potential.

For the benefit of patients and the public, we support the inclusion of chiropractic services in all health systems.



# 4

## We maintain that chiropractic extends beyond the care of patients to the promotion of better health and the well-being of our communities.

Chiropractic is a health profession concerned with the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mechanical disorders of the musculoskeletal system and the impact of these disorders on the function of the nervous system and on general health. There is an emphasis on manual treatments, including spinal adjustment and other joint and soft tissue manipulation.

As primary, portal-of-entry health professionals, chiropractors are responsible for the continuous assessment of the general health status of patients under their care. Chiropractors also engage in campaigns to promote better health in their communities, in workplaces

and online.

We support the role of chiropractors as health advocates. In many parts of the world, access to health services is sparse. Chiropractors may support their communities through health promotion activities to help people restore, maintain or enhance their optimal state of health.

By focusing on factors that improve human health and well-being, rather than on factors that cause disease, chiropractors take a whole-person approach to biological, psychological and social elements of individual health.





# 5

## We champion the rights of chiropractors to practice according to their training and expertise.

Chiropractors are governed by legislation in each state in the United States, every province in Canada and all territories in Australia, as well as in many other countries around the world. In many of these jurisdictions, scope of practice is defined by law; in others, scope is not defined and chiropractors are free to practice as they wish within the framework of general laws and regulations.

Chiropractors undergo an extensive program of training that involves many thousands of hours of education. Rigorous assessment ensures that upon graduation chiropractors are deemed safe and competent to practice.

We recognize that chiropractic training may vary in emphasis and content and acknowledge the role of accreditation agencies in measuring educational content against key competencies.

We believe that it serves the best interests of patients and the public when chiropractors are permitted to exercise their professional skills and competencies consistent with their education, including certified and accredited post-graduate training.

In keeping with a hallmark of all health professionals, we support the importance of lifelong learning and the value of continuous professional development.





# 6

## We promote evidence-based practice: integrating individual clinical expertise, the best available evidence from clinical research, and the values and preferences of patients.

Evidence-based practice has been universally adopted across health care as the standard of care.

It comprises three elements. Firstly, the needs and preferences of the individual patient are taken into account, which are in turn influenced by cultural norms, beliefs, attitudes and expectations.

Secondly, evidence-based practice relies upon the experience and expertise of the clinician, drawing on their wisdom, knowledge, training and skills.

Thirdly, in making decisions about care, chiropractors are informed by their judicious use of the best available evidence from clinical research, recognizing that there are cases where high quality evidence from research may not yet exist, or it may be inconclusive.

We promote evidence-based practice that represents these fundamental elements, acknowledging that specific circumstances will dictate individualized approaches to care.



# 7

We are committed to supporting our member national associations through advocacy and sharing best practices for the benefit of patients and society.

Our constituent members are national associations of chiropractors in seven regions around the world. Some of these associations have many thousands of members while others, in countries where chiropractic is less well established, have very few. We dedicate ourselves to working with all members by identifying their needs and by supporting and empowering them to reach their goals.

We advocate for chiropractic to be legally recognized in countries that are not currently subject to laws or regulation. We support member associations with attendance at high level meetings involving government officials and health policy makers.

Our network of experts means that we can support the work of our members with access to global data on chiropractic, repositories of research evidence, and governance documents. We share national and international guidelines and support the development of professional standards and codes of practice.

As the only chiropractic organization in official relations with the World Health Organization, we have access to resources at the highest level of global health. Our membership of the WHO World Rehabilitation Alliance allow us to advocate for greater recognition of spinal pain and disability as a global burden.





# 8

## We acknowledge the role of chiropractic care, including spinal adjustment, to enhance function, improve mobility, relieve pain and optimize well being.

We recognize that chiropractic is not all about treating back pain and neck pain. Although it's what they're best known for, chiropractors have a broad scope of practice that extends beyond the spine. From the management of sports injuries, to the prevention of disability, to treating joint pain and headaches in children and adults, today's doctors of chiropractic are multi-skilled to deliver effective, non-surgical, non-pharmaceutical health care.

As well as the relief of pain, people seek chiropractic care to restore joint function and improve and maintain their health. A well functioning neuromusculoskeletal system helps people to move better, work better and live

better. This is especially important in older people, where the ageing process may be accompanied by other health issues and where challenges with mobility may make every day activities more difficult.

Chiropractors use standard orthopedic and neurological tests as part of their assessment and use other tests such as diagnostic imaging when clinically indicated. They are highly skilled at detecting and correcting joints that are stiff and restricted, but also may use soft tissue techniques, prescribe exercise, give therapeutic and lifestyle advice or refer to other health professionals.



# 9

We support research that investigates the methods, mechanisms, and outcomes of chiropractic care for the benefit of patients, and the translation of research outcomes into clinical practice.

As more evidence emerges, both from research conducted within the chiropractic profession and from related professions, new knowledge helps chiropractors to better understand which approach to care is likely to be most effective.

Clinical research conducted around the world has investigated the impact of chiropractic care, including spinal manipulation or adjustment, for a range of conditions. There remain gaps in our understanding about the way that spinal manipulation works and how it may be related to outcomes that are observed and reported in clinical practice. Research is ongoing that is

investigating the effects of spinal manipulation on the nervous system and other systems of the body.

One of the challenges in health care is ensuring that the evidence from research is effectively synthesized into clinical practice. We work with knowledge translation experts to support our national association members and chiropractors in communicating the latest research and explaining how it is relevant to the care of patients and the public.





# 10

## We believe that chiropractors are important members of a patient's healthcare team and that interprofessional approaches best facilitate optimum outcomes

Over the past decade, health professionals have recognized the value of people-centered, multidisciplinary teams, which can lead to better health outcomes and enhanced levels of patient satisfaction.

Interprofessional collaboration benefits patients by breaking down traditional silos and providing an environment where health professionals can communicate and understand their respective contributions, strengths and skills.

Regardless of their geographic locations or practice status, most chiropractors can engage in interprofessional, team-based care. Advances in telemedicine mean that information can be

readily shared and chiropractors can participate in patient-centered discussions.

As chiropractic grows, more people experience the benefits of care and include doctors of chiropractic as valued members of their personal health care team. Evidence also shows that patients want their health care team members to communicate with each other.

We support interprofessional health care. By sharing their perspectives and listening to those of colleagues in other disciplines, chiropractors benefit their communities and align with our vision and mission for chiropractic.





We believe that chiropractors should be responsible public health advocates to improve the well being of the communities they serve.

We support WHO initiatives including those related to diet and physical activity, healthy ageing, anti-tobacco, injury prevention, and infectious disease prevention campaigns.

By promoting best practices in public health, chiropractors support their patients and the communities in which they live and work.





# 12

We celebrate individual and professional diversity, inclusion and equity and represent these values throughout our Board and committees.

Our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion across race, gender, age, religion, identity and experience shapes us as a global organization.

Throughout our 7 world regions, chiropractors have different ways of working that are influenced by their education, training, professional perspectives, practice philosophy and environment. This diversity adds to the richness of chiropractic and reflects our society and the range of preferences, attitudes, needs and expectations of the people we serve.

Diversity and inclusion within our organization is

an engine for growth and fosters creative thinking, innovation and problem solving. It embodies varied perspectives, life experiences, cultures and ways of looking at the world to generate insight and better outcomes.

We are committed to challenging discrimination and encouraging equity, diversity and inclusion among our staff, Board, committees and volunteers. Our aim is to be truly representative of all sections of society and regions of the world so that everyone associated with our organization may feel both respected and represented.



# 13

We believe that patients have a fundamental right to ethical, professional care and the protection of enforceable regulation in upholding good conduct and practice.

Putting patients' health interests first is an important principle for professionals, and as a result promotes and encourages trust. Patients expect chiropractors to provide safe, effective and compassionate care.

In jurisdictions where chiropractic is regulated, published standards of conduct, performance and ethics help guide chiropractors to deliver the best care for patients. We believe that patients and the public benefit from regulation, which provides protection and assurance, while also helping to ensure that the reputation of the

chiropractic profession is upheld.

In many countries, chiropractic remains unregulated. In these circumstances, we support and assist with models of self-regulation.

We believe that trust is a key element of the social contract between chiropractic and society. Society has expectations of individual chiropractors and the chiropractic profession as a whole. They expect those caring for them to be competent, altruistic, moral and focused on patients' health care needs.





# 14

We serve the global profession by promoting collaboration between and among organizations and individuals who support the vision, mission, values and objectives of the WFC.

We are an organization whose members are the national associations of chiropractors in over 90 countries across 7 world regions. We encourage our members within each region to work together to promote common values and debate issues of mutual interest. We also support the role of regional federations in bringing chiropractic associations together as a focus for discussion.

As a global federation, we work with organizations both within and outside of the chiropractic profession. Through this collaboration, we gain knowledge, insights and a

better understanding of international health care.

Our work as a non-state actor in official relations with the World Health Organization and our membership of the WHO World Rehabilitation Alliance facilitates collaboration with other groups.

We promote our vision, mission, values and objectives and expect our members to do the same with a view to advancing chiropractic and serving their memberships.



# 15

We support high standards of chiropractic education that empower graduates to serve their patients and communities as high value, trusted health professionals.

There are over 50 educational institutions providing chiropractic education in 17 countries worldwide.

Trust in chiropractic is linked to the standards of education of its health professionals. High standards of education promote trust within society and assurance of safety and competence.

We support the role of national and international chiropractic accreditation agencies and authorities in setting and measuring core competencies for chiropractic education. Standards of education are also linked to testing, licensing and regulation of chiropractors.

Development, maintenance and evolution of standards are linked to societal expectations and prevailing international guidelines.

We promote the expansion of chiropractic education through accredited programs in tertiary institutions, particularly in regions of the world where populations are under-served by chiropractic. Our International Chiropractic Education Alliance promotes best practices and networking between institutions.

We recognize the value of lifelong learning and the responsibility of chiropractors to commit to continuous professional development.





# 16

We believe in nurturing, supporting, mentoring and empowering students and early career chiropractors.

Students and early-career chiropractors are the future of the profession.

We work with the World Congress of Chiropractic Students and other organizations to support the development of youth in chiropractic and provide opportunities for representation at the World Health Assembly and at our congresses and events.

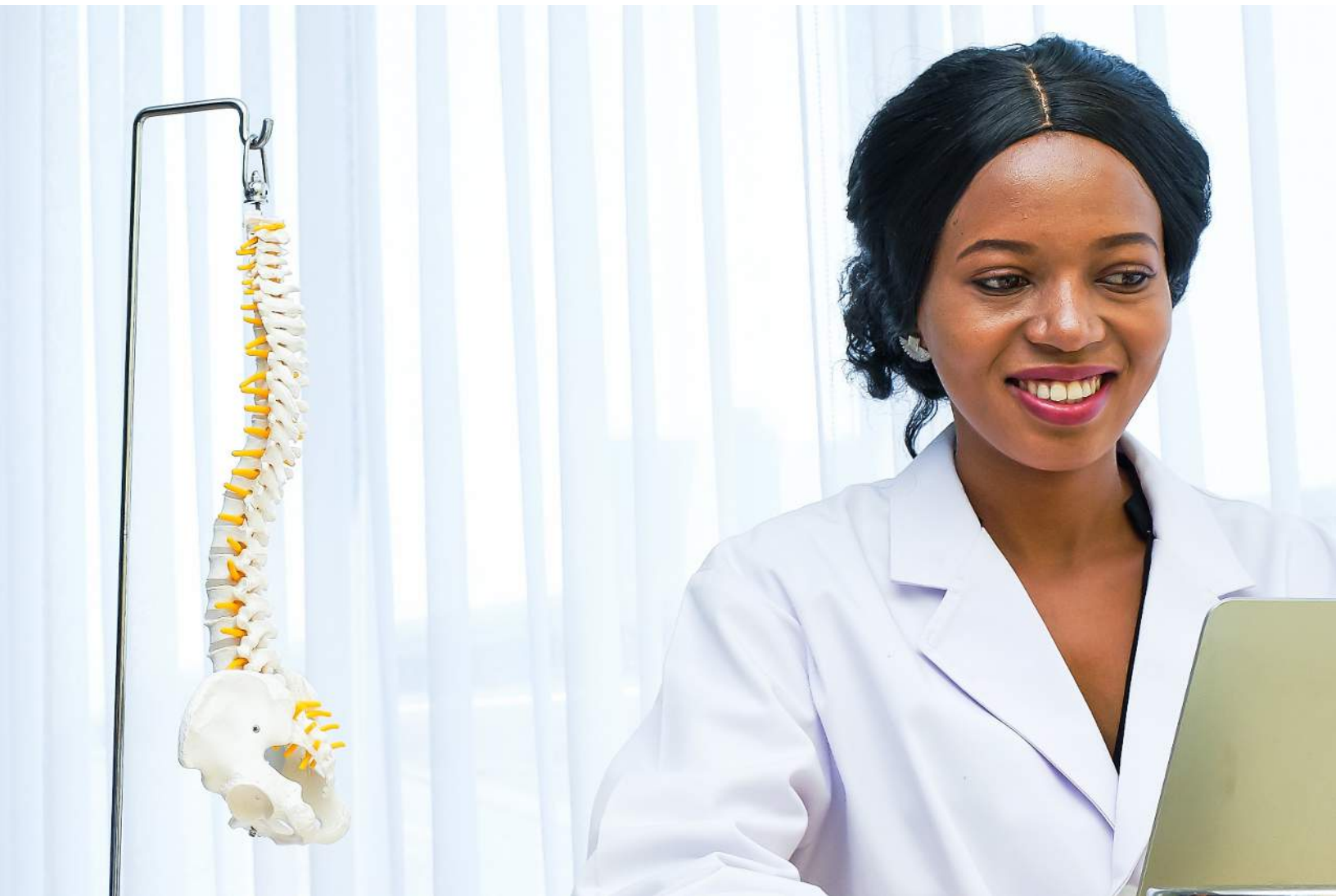
We encourage students and early-career chiropractors to get involved in our initiatives and serve on committees and task forces.

We participate in student engagement events

and provide online forums where our vision, mission and objectives can be questioned and discussed. By doing so, we also learn and grow as an organization.

We celebrate the achievements and activities of students and early career chiropractors on our social media platforms and in our publications, including our *Quarterly World Report*.

We recognize and value the energy, creativity and innovation that students and early career chiropractors bring to the profession and encourage their participation at all levels.



# 17

We are committed to the delivery of congresses and events that inspire, challenge, educate, inform and grow the profession through respectful discourse and positive professional development.

Since 1991, we have hosted biennial congresses that have been held in some of the world's greatest cities. These congresses have evolved into the largest chiropractic scientific meetings, where original, groundbreaking research is presented in poster and platform presentations.

Our biennial congress provides a unique opportunity for chiropractors from around the world to gather to listen to some of the profession's most engaging speakers, watch stimulating debates, participate in a wealth of inspiring workshops and network with colleagues and exhibitors.

The congress provides a platform for discourse and dialogue, where opposing sides of an argument come together. We respect professional diversity and work to ensure that balanced viewpoints are presented in a respectful manner.

We support chiropractic education by hosting a biennial global chiropractic education conference. At this unique event, institutional staff and presidents, academics, political leaders, scholars and students come together to share best practices and advances in health education.





## We believe in continuously improving our understanding of the biomechanical, neurophysiological, psychosocial and general health effects of chiropractic care.

Scientific evidence continues to grow in all areas of health care. With increasing numbers of chiropractors embarking on a research career including a record number of PhD candidates, the volume of published research in chiropractic is continually growing.

We advocate for evidence-based practice and the synthesis of research findings into clinical practice.

Despite increasing knowledge, we recognize that there are elements of chiropractic care that remain not fully understood. There are gaps in the evidence, particularly as it relates to reported changes following spinal adjustment.

We support the work of investigators who commit to improving our understanding of the effects of chiropractic care.

We welcome ongoing work in the fields of biomechanics, neurophysiology and psychology related to spinal pain and disability. We recognize that further clinical research into the general health effects of the chiropractic adjustment / spinal manipulation is needed to test hypotheses and observed effects in practice.

In an era of evidence-based practice, we support investment that will open up new channels of research and strengthen knowledge and understanding of chiropractic care.





# 19

We advocate for public statements and claims of effectiveness for chiropractic care that are honest, legal, decent and truthful.

Publicity and marketing are key elements of the promotion of health professionals, including chiropractors. Patients and the public expect that information in marketing communications is accurate and can be relied upon when they are making health and care decisions.

Many jurisdictions around the world have advertising authorities that provide guidance and support for marketers. In respect of health claims, there are often rules about the level of evidence required to substantiate marketing claims. For example, in the United States, the Federal Trade Commission regulates advertising

and marketing and requires all claims to be supported by reliable scientific research including well-controlled human clinical studies.

Claims for services provided by chiropractors can be direct or implied (for example, through images or the use of testimonials). We strongly discourage claims made by chiropractors in all forms of hard copy or online media that are not supported by high quality evidence.

We advocate for marketing materials, whether online or in print, that are accurate and do not misinform or mislead patients and the public.





# 20

We commit to an EPIC future for chiropractic: evidence-based, people-centered, interprofessional and collaborative.

The values of our #BeEPIC campaign run through every part of our strategic plan. Whether we are working with our constituent member national association, our external stakeholders or promoting the profession, the four elements of EPIC direct our course.

We believe that every chiropractor, regardless of education, practice orientation or philosophy, can work according to the EPIC principles. They are not meant to be prescriptive in any sense and each individual element can take many forms.

The commitment to #BeEPIC is a call to act in the best interests of patients and the public, at the same time recognizing the diversity of the

chiropractic profession.

Our 2005 identity statement sets out that chiropractors are the spinal health care experts in the health care system. Spinal pain and disability are leading causes of sickness absence and premature retirement. It is now known to be prevalent in children under the age of 15.

As spinal health care experts, chiropractors are equipped to meaningfully contribute in reducing the burden of neuromusculoskeletal pain and disability. Directed by the EPIC principles, the future for chiropractic is bright.



# #BeEPIC

**EVIDENCE-BASED**

**PEOPLE-CENTERED**

**INTERPROFESSIONAL**

**COLLABORATIVE**



WORLD FEDERATION OF  
CHIROPRACTIC