

Introduction

Background

This is a summary of why the Cancun Conference on Professional Identity and Curriculum (the Cancun Conference) was held, who attended, the program, the results, and why this event was and will remain significant for the profession.

The meeting was planned by the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC - www.wfc.org), whose members are national association of chiropractors in 86 countries, and the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC - www.chirocolleges.org), whose members are chiropractic schools predominantly in North America but also internationally. It was co-sponsored by the US National Board of Chiropractic Examiners (NBCE - www.nbce.org), and hosted by the Universidad Estatal del Valle de Ecatepec (UNEVE - www.uneve.edu.mx).

The Conference Planning Committee comprised Dr. Gerard Clum, President, WFC and Life Chiropractic College West, Dr. Frank Zolli, President, ACC and Dean of the College of Chiropractic at the University of Bridgeport, Dr. Juan Sanchez, Director, Faculty for Chiropractic, UNEVE, Dr. Alfred Traina, President, Northwestern Health Sciences University and Mr. David Chapman-Smith, Secretary-General, WFC. Substantial support was also received from Dr. Fabrizio Mancini, President, Parker College of Chiropractic, which has an academic partnership with UNEVE.

The WFC and ACC had held three previous education conferences - on philosophy in chiropractic education (Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA, November 2000), on chiropractic clinical education (Sao Paulo, Brazil, October 2002) and on patient examination, assessment and diagnosis (Toronto, Canada October 2004).

Subject and Goals of Conference

In June 2005, the member national associations of the WFC, following an international survey of the profession and an evidence review and broad consultation, accepted the recommendations of a 40-person Task Force on the most appropriate international market identity for the profession. The details of that identity, which comprises a leading statement (the pole, or brand platform), supporting statements (the ground, or brand pillars) and statements as to the personality of the profession, are given in Table 1. They also appear in the Final Report of the WFC Identity Consultation Task Force, which may be found as Appendix A to these Proceedings. That Final Report gives a clear and excellent overview of the WFC Consultation on Identity. It is highly recommended that you read it.

The goals of the Cancun Conference were:

- To discuss the various elements of the market identity adopted by the WFC, and the issues and questions raised by this identity for those involved in chiropractic education.
- To consider how various aspects of identity, including those specifically identified in the conference program, can be addressed effectively in chiropractic education.
- To achieve Consensus Statements on the market identity of the profession, the relationship of this to education, and how to instill a sense of professional identity in chiropractic students.

The Cancun Conference was successful in meeting these goals, and in achieving the Consensus Statements which appear in Table 3.

Table 1: The Identity of the Chiropractic Profession

- 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 use of the following three linked concepts:
 - A leading statement on identity, which must be clear, concise and immediately relevant to both the public and the profession – the ‘pole’ (brand platform).
 - Several important qualifying statements, which provide the necessary context and foundation for the pole – the ‘ground’ (brand pillars).
 - 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) Specialized approach to examination, diagnosis and treatment, based on best available research and clinical evidence 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-centered and biopsychosocial approach, emphasizing the mind/body relationship in health, the self-healing powers of the individual, and individual responsibility for health and encouraging patient independence.

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- 5) *The Personality*. The personality should be a combination of:
- Expert, professional, ethical, knowledgeable; and
 - Accessible, caring, human, positive

Attendance

The names and addresses of registrants for the conference are given in Appendix E to these Proceedings. The chiropractic educational programs represented are given in Table 2. Significant aspects of attendance are that there were approximately 100 delegates representing 30 schools/programs in 13 countries. This meant that the great majority of chiropractic educational institutions worldwide were represented. There were also delegates representing proposed schools in Europe (e.g. Spain and Switzerland) and Latin America (e.g. Argentina and Chile).

Table 2: List of Chiropractic Educational Programmes Represented

Australia	Sweden
Macquarie University	Scandinavian College of Chiropractic
Murdoch University	
RMIT University	Switzerland
	Swiss Chiropractic Institute
Brazil	United Kingdom
Centro Universitário Feevale	Anglo-European College of Chiropractic
Universidade Anhembí Morumbi	University of Glamorgan
Canada	United States of America
Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College	Cleveland Chiropractic Colleges-Kansas City and Los Angeles
Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières	Life University
Denmark	Life Chiropractic College West
University of Southern Denmark	Logan College of Chiropractic
France	National University of Health Sciences
Institut Franco-Européen de Chiropratique	New York Chiropractic College
	Northwestern Health Sciences University
Japan	Palmer College of Chiropractic
RMIT University Japan	Palmer College of Chiropractic Florida
	Parker College of Chiropractic
Mexico	Sherman College of Straight Chiropractic
Universidad Estatal del Valle de Ecatepec	Texas Chiropractic College
	University of Bridgeport, College of Chiropractic
New Zealand	Western States Chiropractic College
New Zealand College of Chiropractic	

Program – Methods and Content

The detailed content appears in the program (see Appendix B). Methods included:

- **Lectures.** Invited presentations from experts.
- **Presentations by those responding to a Call for Abstracts.** Many short presentations chosen from best responses to an open Call for Abstracts.
- **Discussion and debate.** Widespread opportunity for interaction between the participants was a key to the success of the meeting, and this interaction was through the use of panels and allocation of much time for questions and answers.
- **Development of Consensus Statements.** During the Conference a representative panel began drafting Consensus Statements that were then reviewed, amended and agreed in the final session of the Conference.

With respect to the structure and content of the program:

- **Day 1.** In Session 1, Dr. Clum, one of the three Co-chairs of the WFC Identity Consultation Task Force, explained the consultation process and the WFC identity statements. There were then two commentaries on the WFC identity statements from external perspectives – an American lay person’s view from Bram Briggance, PhD, Health Professions Policy Center, University of California at San Francisco and a Mexican medical perspective from Ismael Saenz, MD, Rector, UNEVE. Session 2 provided broad response to the WFC identity statements from representatives of the chiropractic education community in several countries. Sessions 3 and 4 addressed two specific areas of identity - preparation for mainstream practice and ethics/professionalism.
- **Day 2.** Each of four sessions reviewed a further four specific areas of identity – manual treatment methods, the role of exercises/rehabilitation, philosophy and research.
- **Day 3.** Session 1 looked at methods of creating a common sense of chiropractic identity both in faculty and students. Keynote addresses were from Dr. Barry Lewis, presenting the results of a survey of chiropractic students in six colleges in four countries and Dr. Martin Wangler, explaining the methods and success of the real time strategic change technique of large group intervention as used by the Swiss chiropractic profession on the matter of identity at a one day meeting in Davos in 2005. Session 2 was devoted to drafting and reaching agreement on final Consensus Statements.

Results and Observations

The formal outcome of the Cancun Conference appears in the Consensus Statements in Table 3.

Table 3: Cancun Conference Consensus Statements, October 28, 2006

The conference of October 26-28, 2006 convened in Cancun, Mexico by the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC) and the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC), with co-sponsorship from the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners (NBCE), addressed the Final Report of the WFC Task Force on the Identity of the Chiropractic Profession as approved by the WFC Assembly of Members (the Final Report) on June 15, 2005.

With respect to the WFC consultation on the identity of the chiropractic profession:

1. In the fifteen months since its release there has been significant dissemination of the Final Report to the profession by the WFC.
2. However, while we, the participants at this conference, had previously been aware of the Final Report and its identity statements agreed upon by the WFC and its member associations, the purpose, process, current status, and next steps of the WFC Identity Consultation were matters that required additional clarification.
3. This conference significantly increased our understanding of the above matters. As a result of this conference we understand the following:
 - a) The WFC's identity consultation was undertaken at the direction of the WFC Assembly and was designed to offer a framework for the organization of a global, profession-wide market identity.
 - b) The purpose of the identity consultation and the specific role of the identity statements in the Final Report were presented and discussed. The statements specifically address the branding and the promotion of the profession in the health care marketplace. As an outcome of this conference we affirm that the intent of the identity statements was separate and distinct from a comprehensive description of chiropractic education or practice.
 - c) Certain traditional chiropractic concepts and words may be confusing to the public and contentious in the profession. After discussion it was understood why these concepts and words were implied rather than expressly included in the identity statements.
 - d) The results of the identity consultation are offered to the member associations of the WFC as a basis for their promotion and advancement of the profession. How this is done, including the development of public education programs and materials, is a matter for each member association's consideration.

4. It is understood and agreed that the development and adoption of the identity consultation outcomes represents the first step in a continuing process. The next step should be the widest possible dissemination of the identity statements. To this end the following are recommended:
 - a) That the WFC communicate this identity to representative stakeholders to invite their help and support in further dissemination.
 - b) That the WFC, by itself and through others, should conduct ongoing surveys concerning awareness and acceptance of the identity statements.
 - c) That the WFC should develop a report on the intent, design, methodology, results and associated processes of the identity survey and seek the publication of the same in an appropriate peer-reviewed journal.
5. On this basis we, the conferees, express support for the WFC's identity statements.
6. We recommend that public education by the profession and its members be consistent with the identity statements.
7. The manner in which this is accomplished should be a matter of choice for each representative stakeholder.

An excellent example of public education consistent with the identity statements that was presented at this conference, and which combines various elements of the pole, the ground and the personality, is the "Straighten Up" program recently adopted by the Bone and Joint Decade in connection with World Spine Day on October 16, 2006.

The central purpose of the meeting was to see whether the educational community accepted the market identity agreed by the profession and, if so, how this could best be communicated to faculty members and students through the curriculum and generally. Our key observations are:

1. There was broad support from colleges for the WFC's identity statements (Consensus Statement 5).
2. However, as indicated in the Conference's Consensus Statements, this was only after delegates present had better understood the thorough process and the exact purpose of the consultation. With respect to purpose, this was to develop a clear marketing or brand identity for chiropractic services within the health care marketplace (Consensus Statement 3), something separate, distinct and different from a full description of chiropractic in terms of education, practice or legal scope of practice. It was only after explanation of this at the Cancun Conference that this was clearly understood by all the college representatives in attendance (Consensus Statement 3).

3. Accordingly, the WFC and its members have a large ongoing task to see that the WFC identity statements are known to and understood by the profession. The Cancun Conference recommended that the WFC work with all 'representatives stakeholders', such as national associations, educational institutions and student bodies, to encourage their assistance in promoting awareness and adoption of the WFC market identity (Consensus Statement 4).
4. With respect to chiropractic schools, Dr. Carl Cleveland III presented a survey of US schools prior to the Cancun Conference which showed mixed reactions concerning support for and adoption of the identity statements (see pgs. 10-13). It was recommended that this survey now be repeated to assess the impact of the Conference.

With respect to students, Dr. Barry Lewis presented a survey of students in six schools in four countries - Anglo-European College of Chiropractic (UK), Durban University of Technology (South Africa), Life Chiropractic College West and National University of Health Sciences (USA), Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University (Australia) and Universidad Estatal del Valle de Ecatepec (Mexico) (see pgs. 117-127). The students completed the survey form used by the profession in October 2004 as part of the identity consultation. (This form and all other documentation relevant to the identity consultation may be found at www.wfc.org under About WFC and Identity Consultation). This survey showed significant differences between students at the three North American colleges (Life West, NUHS and UNEVE) and the three commonwealth colleges (AECC, DUT and RMIT). In turn, this highlighted the important role of colleges in instilling a common market identity in students internationally.

5. One question raised at the meeting was why the word 'subluxation' did not appear in the identity statements. It was explained that the identity statements were directed at the general public rather than the profession. This means that technical terms, likely to be confusing to the public, including subluxation, are inappropriate in this context. That was accepted by all present who understood that the identity statements covered the essence of subluxation in referring to the relationship between the spine and the nervous system, improved function in the neuromusculoskeletal system and improved overall health, well being and quality of life (See Consensus Statement 3c).
6. During the meeting Dr. Ron Kirk had presented the *Straighten Up Program* developed at Life University, promoted internationally by the WFC, and recently adopted by the Bone and Joint Decade (BJD) for World Spine Day on October 16, 2006. This was received with enthusiasm. It was decided to mention this in the Consensus Statements because Straighten Up was such an excellent example of promotion of the profession consistent with the identity statements. Straighten Up not only focuses on the spine, but also spinal health, function, well being, activity - and an individual's own responsibility for his/her own health. Additionally it has only been adopted internationally and by the BJD because of a policy of collaboration with other health professionals.

Conclusion

The Cancun Conference, as with the previous WFC/ACC conferences in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Sao Paulo, Brazil and Toronto, Canada, demonstrated the ability and value of the chiropractic profession working in unity to achieve an international consensus on important issues.

It is important to understand that the WFC began its identity consultation in 2003 at the specific request of its member national associations worldwide, who accepted that the profession needed a clear market identity, did not have one, and would suffer significant loss of market share in the future unless there was an appropriate internationally accepted market identity. Any such identity would have to satisfy two key criteria – first connecting with the public (i.e. being effective in the real world where current public perceptions have to be taken into account) and second having the support of all in the profession (i.e. the identity had to be sufficiently inclusive that all chiropractors could promote themselves and the profession in a manner that might be individual to them but was consistent with the identity).

We find it exciting that the consensus on market identity that was achieved with the profession is now supported by the profession's educational institutions throughout the world.

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