

CPRQB COMMISSION REPORT

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At the first Brazilian Chiropractic Congress, held in Curitiba in September 2006, members of the Brazilian Chiropractors' Association (ABQ) proposed a committee to deal with the now urgent need for legislation of the profession - the Comissão Pró-Regulamentação da Quiropraxia no Brasil (CPRQB). Under an emergency plan with 3 months duration, from October to December, it was decided to try to get approval of the draft law by the third and final government Commission, and even if possible the final vote of the full legislature/Camara, before a new group of legislators would take their seats in February 2007 following the National elections due, and now over, in November.

Background information:

- There is no law to protect the title chiropractor or the profession in Brazil. Because of this the COFFITO, the government-approved council that licenses and regulates the physical therapists, has ruled that chiropractic is a specialty of PT and several part-time postgraduate technique courses have started in the past two years, giving a certificate in chiropractic. These are typically 100-300 hours over a series of weekends.
- An Association was formed to represent this group - ABRAFIQ - Brazilian Physical Therapists Chiropractic Association. They claim to have 1200 members, though this is exaggerated.
- PTs in other countries have started to notice this, and there is a real risk this will become a trend in Latin America.
- We have a draft law in the Congress since 2001 (PL 4199-01) protecting the title and the scope of practice of chiropractic.

We came to the conclusion that, if we wanted to have this law passed, we would need to have someone, ideally a DC, in the capital Brasilia helping us. This person had to work most of his time for this purpose - to follow up the law, to lobby with the legislators, etc. Dr Evergisto Lopes Souto, a DC graduated from FEEVALE University in Novo Hamburgo and a former student council leader, was available and accepted to do the mission. I was chosen as the Coordinator for the CPRQB Commission, a group of 17 chiropractors with a representative from each state in Brazil.

I spent most of November in Brasilia with Dr Lopes and our first goal was accomplished because we managed to have our draft law passed in the last commission - Constitution and Justice, a very important one. We managed to meet and to relate with many legislators, several party leaders, their advisors and support staff. We had meetings with the executive director and

coordinators from the Work and Health Ministry, persuading them to look at the description they had of chiropractic (not a university level course but a technical one ...very poor)

Our CPRQB Commission managed also to prepare and to print materials about chiropractic. With the support of FEEVALE University we translated and distributed the WHO Guidelines on Basic Training and Safety in Chiropractic, with their minimum educational standards so much higher than the PT short courses. We are using these materials with the legislators and other important people.

We also followed and tried to block all the campaign against us made by the COFFITO and ABRAFIQ.

Now the law has to go to the plenary of the legislature, the Camara, to be approved. After that it goes to the Senate and then to the President for final signature.

We had and we are still going to face two big challenges:

The first is the huge opposition from COFFITO, the physiotherapy council and the ABRAFIQ – COFFITO is a powerful Council with 95,000 members and huge financial revenue. We are under 200 professionals and 700 students, without any financial support behind us except the two chiropractic schools.

We tried everything we could to persuade COFFITO – ABRAFIQ to drop their opposition, but without success. We had two official meetings with the president of the COFFITO, several side meetings with the ABRAFIQ and our conclusion was that it will be impossible to change their minds, mainly due to the fact they make lots of money with their weekend courses. The opposition is led by the individuals who are making the most money.

One thing we did and are still doing with the COFFITO is to encourage them to change their manual therapy courses from chiropractic to the title ‘manipulative therapist’ as in other countries. Another thing was to show them the lack of qualifications of their teachers, and that their courses are completely unsatisfactory according to the WHO Guidelines.

We are now involved in a court case against one of their teachers, Matheus de Souza, who has a fraudulent diploma of chiropractic from the Colorado School of the Healing Arts in Colorado, USA. We now have affidavit evidence of this, thanks to help from Dr James Winterstein at National University.

The second big problem is that the ABQ’s recent Congress in September lost a lot of money and, for this reason our Legislative Commission has no funds to work with. The 17 members of the Commission are pledging their own money. Most of them are new graduates, just starting their professional life. Other BCA members are doing the same. My family and I have already committed substantial funds for travel and other costs. These costs include support for our member lobbying in Brasília, Dr Evergisto Lopes, printed materials, and trips. The schools are helping and some friends from overseas who are married to Brazilians or just because they sympathize with our work already gave US\$1,300,00; non DCs are also involved in our

fundraising and helping us with funds. Supporters have given free space to have our head office in Brasilia.

Our plan for the next 12 months involves:

1. To maintain an office and someone full time in Brasilia
2. To keep following up the progression of the law, to block the lobby against us and to continue the work with the legislators, their advisors and party leaders;
3. to have important legislators visit and meet students and teachers at the two schools
4. To have a journalist helping with a PR campaign.
5. To organize a full week about spine problems in the Congress, trying to get chiropractic patients in the field of sports and well-known medical doctors that support chiropractic to present there.
6. To maintain a good communication with our members, by telephone, emails;
7. To improve the ABQ website
8. To have professional lobbyists helping us - we already have a group who has done some work for us without charge in December;
9. To continue to work to change the description of chiropractic with the Ministry of Work. There is a commission in the Ministry of Work which deals with the each profession's code, its descriptions and regulations, and they have agreed to meet this semester to change the regulations they have for chiropractic. This is very important. We will have to fly experts in to meet with the commission.
10. To continue to work with the Ministry of Health's National Health Committee to get chiropractic representation on it;
11. To file and prosecute a complaint with the "Public Defense Ministry". Brazil has a system that is called Ministério Publico where they investigate any complaint from the public, related to safety or corruption...anything that can be a harm to the public. We already had a meeting in December with one of the prosecutors from there about the claim from the COFFITO, trying to legislate against an established profession, setting up and supporting weekend courses given by someone with no proper training (the teacher is a graduate from Matheus de Souza's courses). The prosecutor has indicated we have a good case for them to be involved, since Brazil now has two chiropractic schools recognized by the Ministry of Education. Our Commission has found a lawyer who is willing to take the case on reduced fees, and we will need money to pay her.
12. So in our budget the commission is looking for money to support:
 - Expenses of Dr. Evergisto Lopes in Brasilia, ABQ representative/ chief lobbyist
 - Professional lobbyist expenses
 - Communications, website, media campaign
 - Legal expenses
 - Meetings and public presentations
 - Office general - printing, travel, supplies, etc.

Our strategy is:

1. to continue a fundraising campaign with the chiropractic community inside Brazil;

2. to have the support of the schools there
3. to have financial support from the international community
4. to help reorganize ABQ
5. to have this Spine week in the Congress
6. to keep fighting until we succeed

We ask for help from the World Federation of Chiropractic and our colleague DCs and friends from around the world as we fight this very important campaign for law to protect the profession in Brazil and Latin America. We have done so much work to open two chiropractic schools and establish the profession in Brazil. The reply from the PTs and informally trained 'quiropatias' in our country has been to get together to try to control chiropractic themselves. We will not let them - but we really need help for this big fight for chiropractic.

Copies to: CPRQB Commission members
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