
COMMENTARY

Looking back at the lawsuit that transformed the chiropractic profession: Overview

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The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief overview of *Looking Back at the Lawsuit That Transformed the Chiropractic Profession*, which is a series of 8 research papers that explore the historical events surrounding the *Wilk v American Medical Association* lawsuit and how these events may have had an influence on the chiropractic profession.

Key Indexing Terms: Health Occupations; Chiropractic; Medicine; Humanities; History, 20th Century; Antitrust Laws

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INTRODUCTION

The chiropractic profession has a remarkable history that some people may be unaware of. Surrounding historical facts are also myths and misinformation that can cloud the truth. Knowing the facts about events and people may help to provide the context that is required to interpret modern-day events. Those who are familiar with chiropractic may have heard of a historic lawsuit that had a tremendous impact on the chiropractic profession in the United States. However, very little has been published about these events in the literature.

Because of the paucity of literature on this topic, NCMIC Group, Inc, invited Drs Claire Johnson and Bart Green, who are chiropractic practitioners, educators, and historians, to research the history of the *Wilk v American Medical Association (AMA)* lawsuit.¹ They had inherited this project from Dr Joseph C. Keating Jr., who originally began this project many years ago. Drs Johnson and Green completed their investigations after interviewing key participants, analyzing court transcripts, and reviewing a multitude of historical documents. NCMIC has chosen to publish this text as a special issue of the *Journal of Chiropractic Education*, which is a scientific journal that is included in PubMed, to ensure that chiropractors anywhere in the world will have access to this information. The following is a brief overview of what to expect from each of the chapters.

OVERVIEW

Part 1: The first paper provides a brief review of the history of the American Medical Association (AMA) and the origins of chiropractic. It explores how the AMA

began its monopoly of health care in the United States, possible reasons that organized medicine acted against chiropractic, and how these events influenced the chiropractic profession.²

Part 2: The second paper is a brief review of the history of how the AMA rose to dominate health care in the United States and how the chiropractic profession fought to survive in the first half of the 20th century. The early years of the development of chiropractic's practice, research, and education are discussed.³

Part 3: The third paper reviews the history of the growth of chiropractic, its public relations campaigns, and internal conflicts that contributed to the events surrounding the *Wilk v AMA* lawsuit.⁴

Part 4: The fourth paper discusses the origins of AMA's increased efforts to contain and eliminate the chiropractic profession and the development of the Chiropractic Committee, which would later transform into the AMA's Committee on Quackery.⁵

Part 5: The fifth paper describes events surrounding the eventual end of the AMA's Committee on Quackery and the evidence of the efforts the AMA used to boycott the chiropractic profession.⁶

Part 6: The sixth paper describes the plaintiffs, lead lawyer, and the events immediately before the lawsuit was filed.⁷

Part 7: The seventh paper provides a summary of the lawsuit, first filed in 1976, and its conclusion with the final denial of appeals in 1990.⁸

Part 8: The final chapter discusses possible impacts that the lawsuit had on the chiropractic profession and what the profession is doing at present.⁹

NCMIC is proud to support the publication of this series. NCMIC has proudly protected and served the

chiropractic profession since 1946.^{10–12} Created by chiropractors for chiropractors, NCMIC's mission is to serve and support chiropractors, their patients, and our communities. We are proud not only to serve the chiropractic profession but also to have played an active role in helping to overcome the challenges it has faced through the years. "We Take Care of Our Own" is our promise and the way we do business every day.

CONCLUSION

These papers explore the historic situations that chiropractors experienced and discuss how some of these events may have influenced the chiropractic profession of today. This series illustrates challenges the profession has faced in the past and how these challenges were overcome and offers lessons for the future as we continue to work to advance the profession.

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This project was funded and the copyright is owned by NCMIC. The views expressed in this article are only those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of NCMIC or the Association of Chiropractic Colleges. No conflicts of interest were reported.

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