



*Dynamic Chiropractic* – November 16, 1998, Vol. 16, Issue 24

## **Medical Ethics in the Third Millennium**

### **Chiropractic at the World Congress of Catholic MDs**

By Karen Shields-Wright

The 19th world congress of the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations (FIAMC) took place in New York City, September 10-13, in conjunction with the 67th annual meeting of the Catholic Medical Association-USA (CMA-USA).

Along with the FIAMC general assembly meeting, over 500 participants were present. The FIAMC represents 48 countries and meets every four years. This year's congress offered papers from scholars, leaders in the church, theologians, and scientific researchers. The topics ranged from theological and ethical issues of health care to the scientific research in the field of bioethics relating to birth control, abortion, natural family planning, and compassionate care and euthanasia.

As the president of the Association for Catholic Chiropractors (AFCC) and a special guest of FIAMC at the World Congress, I was one of 30 international faculty speakers, a first for chiropractic. I presented "Praxis of Practice: Spirituality in the Clinical Setting."

During the conference, I represented the chiropractic profession and met with Prof. Gian Luigi Gigli, MD, the president of the FIAMC and discussed future affiliations of the two professions. I also was introduced to Dr. George Isajiw, MD (USA), the newly elected secretary-general of FIAMC, and Richard A. Watson, MD, the newly-elected president of the Catholic Medical Association from New Jersey. Our goal is to see our profession become an international federation under the direction of the pontifical council, and join in on collaborative projects.

**A First! AFCC Greets Cardinal John O'Connor, Vatican Representative to All USA Catholic Health Care Workers**

Dr. P. Thomas Davis attended the conference on Friday, where he and myself had the privilege to be greeted by Cardinal John O'Connor. Cardinal O'Connor is the archbishop of New York and the Vatican's representative to the U.S. Catholic health care workers.

During the mass, the cardinal offered a prayer for the chiropractic profession. The cardinal's father was a chiropractor in the early 1900s. The cardinal had been sent all the documents of the association and replied with a positive response of his support and prayers.

A listing of the current members was given to the cardinal, and the names of the Catholic chiropractors who have called in but not yet become members. We are all in his prayers. The same information was personally given to ecclesiastical assistant Fr. Vitor Feytor Pinto to take to Archbishop Lozano at the council.

### **Other Church Representatives**

During the conference, I met with Msgr. James Cassidy, who is active in health and hospital policy and was the pontifical council's representative in Rome. He is the main catalyst in developing the umbrella for all the health professionals in the council's office in Rome. Msgr. Cassidy also introduced the project of the AFCC to Mr. Tracy Early, a reporter from the Catholic News Service, who inquired about the association.

During the conference, I had the privilege of introducing this new organization to Archbishop Edwin O'Brien, DD, STD, the archbishop for the military services in Washington, D.C. Archbishop O'Brien is also the new ecclesial advisor to the CMA-USA, and a dear friend of Robert Gregory, DC, of Nanuet, New York. Archbishop O'Brien reviewed our document and offered much praise.

Other connections made during the conference were with Alfred Murphy, MD, STD, the representative to the United Nations, NGO-ECOSOC for FIAMC, and Deacon Lawrence O'Toole, the university chaplain of New York Medical College, who happens to be a chiropractic patient of Dr. Gregory.

Drs. Robert Gregory, Diane Gregory Hennessy, and Christopher Sisinni of New York also represented the AFCC and the chiropractic profession, attending the concluding mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

### **Affiliation Proposed with FIAMC -- Catholic Medical Physicians and Catholic Chiropractic Physicians**

At the FIAMC general assembly on September 11, the proposal was put before the assembly to allow affiliate status of nonmedical physician associations. The issue was tabled until their next extraordinary congress because of the question, "What is an affiliation status?" Since that issue was not addressed before the assembly, nor was a clear picture offered by the Vatican officials, at that time it was left up to each profession to address the issue. It will now be opened to additional considerations.

The only negative issue was raised by an MD from New Zealand. She implied that other types of providers might have questionable practices, which would have to be considered. Otherwise, no other delegates had any problem with collaboration with chiropractors. The stated views of many were that they would warmly welcome our participation.

Some MDs from the Asian countries desired to have their Catholic colleagues who practiced oriental medicine be considered. Over the next four months, there will be a discussion among the member delegates on what will be the affiliation status for any nonmedical provider within their particular organization.

### **History of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers**

The Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers was developed by Pope John Paul II to assist the world's health care providers in offering compassionate care in the spirit of the church's teachings on social and ethics issues to promote human dignity through the gospel of life. What is now in place is the council at the Vatican, which produces a journal, website, research, other publications, and a yearly conference.

There are now health care organizations consisting of the following professions: MDs; social workers; hospitals; hospital volunteers; hospital chaplains; nurses; and pharmacists (see names below). There is also an association for the sick and disabled.

The pontifical council around the world consists of representatives in two ways: bishops and associations. Each country, which has Catholic health care facilities, has bishops responsible for health care ministry. Listings can be taken off the Vatican's website, or you can call the AFCC offices.

### **Current Federations of Catholic Associations of Health Care Workers**

- FIAMC -- Federation Internationale des Associations Medicales Catholiques (currently MDs, DOs)

- FIPC -- Federation Internationale des Pharmaciens Catholiques (pharmacists)
- CICIAMS -- Comité International Catholique des Infirmieres et Assistantes Medico-Sociales (social workers in Catholic hospitals)

Associations of Religions in Health Service:

- FIROS -- Federazione Italiana Religiose Ospedaliere
- FERS -- Federacion Española de Religiosas Sanitarias
- REPSA -- Religieuses dans les Professions de Santé
- FREM -- Federaciòn de Religiosas Enfermeras Mexicanas

Associations of Hospital Chaplains:

- AIPAS -- Associazione Italiana di Pastorale Sanitaria
- AH -- Aumônerie des Hopitaux
- NACC -- National Association of Catholic Chaplains

Associations of the Sick:

- Fraternité Chretienne
- Volontari della Sofferenza (Volunteers)

### **Federations Needed for Other Health Care Workers**

There are no coordinated federations for these health care workers:

- (1) primary providers -- chiropractors; dentists; naturopaths; osteopaths; oriental medical physicians;
- (2) allied health care workers: PTs; occupational therapists; nurse assistants; technicians, etc; or
- (3) nonlicensed health care workers.

## **The Proposal**

The first goal of the council is to develop umbrella organizations which will have different branches of each profession in which Catholics offer care. This will allow each profession to have communication directly to the council on the international level via their own federation of national associations.

The second goal is to have internal communications and collaborative efforts among all the "associations of the faithful" providers. Since we are primary providers, the council has directed FIAMC to develop a "modality of cooperation" with all other types of "physicians" of various schools and disciplines. We have been the first because of our initial request last year.

## **The Next Step: A Meeting of World's Catholic Providers of Health Care**

The associations previously listed have been called to convene in Rome. Chiropractors of the AFCC are invited to the assembly of all Catholic health care organizations in February 2000. AFCC is requested to form an international federation for the future.

## **Assistance Offered by FIAMC Offices in Rome**

Dr. Gigli directed us to their executive director, Ms. Isabelle Biondi. She has offered to send out notices to the national chiropractic associations requesting their assistance in locating Catholic chiropractors. This will allow all Catholic chiropractors to partake in the spiritual care and ethical educational programs offer by the Vatican and national conferences on an equal footing.

This in no way displaces their allegiance to the local, national or international chiropractic associations.

## **AFCC's Response**

To send a report to the FIAMC offices regarding three issues:

1. to assure that the directive of the holy see regarding the issues of life continue to be preeminent in all the meeting given by or for all health care workers.
2. to assure cooperation and collaboration among all primary and secondly providers;

3. to assure autonomy of each professional association to provide the necessary resources to assist in the implementation of the gospel of life directives and for the particular needs of each group.

We will send a letter to the pontifical council for participation status if we develop international supporting members, otherwise we will attend as advisors. We will formally accept the invitation for our members to participate in the week's celebrations.

Mark your calendar for the jubilee, the week of February 11, 2000. You are invited!

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