



Dynamic Chiropractic – May 1, 2000, Vol. 18, Issue 10

Palmer's Research Director Represents Chiropractic at Alternative Care Meetings

By Editorial Staff

DAVENPORT, Iowa - William Meeker, DC, MPH, director of research, Palmer Center for Chiropractic Research, was invited to speak at two meetings in Boston, Mass., focusing on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). The meetings were sponsored by the Harvard Medical School teaching hospital, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) of the National Institutes of Health.

"This meeting provided general information about the field of CAM, including strategies, ethics, safety, resources and challenges, to an audience of more than 600 people," Dr. Meeker explained. The attendees included medical practitioners, psychologists, social workers, managed care executives and health benefits administrators.

Dr. Meeker asserted the vital importance of chiropractic being represented at such meetings to "expose more people to the benefits and efficacy of chiropractic." He added: "We also have a responsibility to clarify public perception of chiropractic's larger role in health care. It's up to us to change the perception of chiropractic from an 'alternative' to medical care to a different way of looking at health."

The first meeting, "Implications for Clinical Practice and State-of-the-Science Symposia," March 12-15, was directed by David Eisenberg, MD, director of the Center for Alternative Medicine Research and Education, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, Boston. Dr. Eisenberg is particularly known as the research leader of two surveys of alternative medicine use in the U.S.^{1,2} that received national media coverage. The surveys revealed substantial increases in patients going to alternative health care providers.

The program included presentations of clinical research projects by the directors of CAM research centers. Dr. Meeker, as principal investigator of the Consortial Center for Chiropractic Research (CCCR), one of the nine CAM research centers supported by the NCCAM, presented the progress of the CCCR. He is also an appointee to the NCCAM Advisory Council.

James Barassi,DC,DABSP, research fellow in medicine, Harvard Medical School, and Scott Haldeman, DC, MD, PhD, clinical professor, University of California, Irvine and adjunct professor, Los Angeles Chiropractic College, joined Dr. Meeker on the program.

Dr. Meeker reports that chiropractic was an important topic within many of the discussions at the meeting. He assessed that the comments about chiropractic "were both curious and supportive."

The second meeting, "Complementary and Alternative Medicine," was an open town meeting on March 15, attended by approximately 500 people from the Boston area. It was developed by Stephen Straus,MD, the new director of the NCCAM, and moderated by Dr. Eisenberg. The forum included overviews of CAM approaches, including one about chiropractic research presented by Dr. Meeker, followed by a question-and-answer session.

"It was the first public meeting on CAM in which the NCCAM has been involved," Dr. Meeker said. "It was developed in response to the increased public usage of CAM, including chiropractic, and the NCCAM's desire to respond and communicate its understanding of the situation."

References

1. Eisenberg D, Kessler R, Foster C, et al. Unconventional medicine in the United States - prevalence, costs, and patterns of use. *N Engl J Med* 1993;328:246-52.
2. Eisenberg D, Davis R, Ettner S, et al. Trends in alternative medicine use in the United States, 1990-1997. *JAMA* 1998;280:1569-1575.



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