

with Jon Kec, D.C.

CHIROPRACTICAL

ACA & ICA UNITE FOR CHIROPRACTIC'S FUTURE



Host Jon Kec, DC

For far too long, people told us that getting the ACA and the ICA here on the same mic, pushing for a common future together, was impossible. Well, guess what? On this episode of Chiropractical, we're gonna rewrite history. Dr. Kris Anderson of the American Chiropractic Association and Dr. Joe Betz of the International Chiropractic Association, together unified for Medicare modernization, something that will fundamentally reshape the career of every single chiropractor listening. If you're a student, a practicing DC, or someone who cares about the survival and growth of this profession, put down whatever you're doing because this is a landmark moment.

This is Chiropractical

Welcome back to Chiropractical. I'm your host, Jon Kec, and in this episode, history is being made. If you've been in this profession for five minutes or 50 years, you know the story of chiropractic has been defined by distinct voices and differing paths. But today, we're turning a major page. We're joined by leadership representing both major national organizations, Dr.

Kris Anderson of the American Chiropractic Association and Dr. Joe Betz of the International Chiropractic Association. We're all here together unifying the chiropractic message, working to modernize Medicare, expanding patient access, and pushing our profession further into the mainstream than ever before.

Dr. Kris Anderson, Dr. Joe Betz, it truly is an honor having both of you here with us on Chiropractical.

Dr. Kris Anderson

Thanks, Jon. It, it's been a, a pleasure to work with, uh, uh, Joe on this, and as you pointed out, a lot of people behind the scenes that are supportive of this movement and, uh, NCMIC is, is key among those. So I'm glad to be here and to share, uh, what we've been working on with, with your audience

Host Jon Kec, DC

This is, this is a seismic thing for the profession to have the two of you in your roles together talking about a joint venture is, is huge.

So to set it up for everybody, for the first time in 50 years, the profession is actually finally speaking with one voice. The ACA and the ICA have finally aligned behind one written proposal on H.R.539 and S106, and y'all are working together to pass the bill and strengthen it for the profession. While this has been a team effort and the support from each of your boards has been paramount, this truly could not have happened without the two of you in these roles. So first, thank you

Dr. Joe Betz

It's been a year now that we've been working together and, and, uh, some people inside the profession know about it and understand it, but most of the profession doesn't, uh, even know that we've been, been collaborating and, and trying to work together towards Medicare, uh, improvement.

So it's exciting to share this

Host Jon Kec, DC

Well, I, I'm excited to kind of dive in. I guess before we do that, really quickly, just a little bit about both of you, your current respective roles with the ACA and ICA, just to give everybody some background before we start talking about the, the, the big, uh, meat and potatoes of today.

Dr. Kris Anderson

I'm Kris Anderson. I'm the, uh, president of the American Chiropractic Association, and I'm in full-time practice in Grand Forks, North Dakota. And it's, um... This is my third year as a member of the Board of Governors for the ACA and, uh, my first year as president. But, uh, during the past year, even before I became president, I had the opportunity to meet, um, Dr.

Betz, and have really gotten to know Jill over this year. So it, it's been just a, a, a great, um, a great time to-- for the both of us to be in leadership, and we've, we've formed a, a really strong friendship and working relationship. So, you know, the timing, I, I think is, is, uh, just couldn't be better

Dr. Joe Betz

I'm, uh, Dr. Joe Betz. I, I'm practicing in Boise, Idaho. I've been practicing for about 25 years now, private practice. I have a couple clinics, and I've actually been involved with the ICA in leadership roles for, uh, probably 15 years or so, and on the board for most of those years. And so I've been, uh, involved for a long time.

I've been president for, um, for... Just finished my first year, um, last spring. So I'm excited to, uh, to be working, um, for the profession. And, um, luckily, you know, Kris and I, like you mentioned, really did hit it off well. Personally, we get, we get, uh, we have a lot in common. Um, we both love chiropractic and wanna see chiropractic improve for patients and improve access, and we have a lot of common goals that we share.

So it's been, um, it's been a great kickoff to, to this collaborative effort

Host Jon Kec, DC

Let's give everyone just a little bit of background on H.R.539 and S106 just so they kind of have an idea of where we're going today. Can you explain a little bit more about each of the, the respective bills?

Dr. Kris Anderson

Yeah, I'm happy to. Um, the ACA has been, um, carrying the language that, that currently exists with, again, H.R. 539 and S. 106, uh, for the past, I think this is our fourth Congress where we've had, you know, the same language. It's been a popular bipartisan bill. It's been, you know, very politically, um, uh, viable as a path forward.

But we've, we've always known there were other issues that, uh, we need for the profession to help move things forward, and that's where this collaboration has really evolved to, where, you know, we're all in support of 539 as a yes, we need to modernize Medicare. And, and that's the, the main thing is it would create the opportunity for Medicare beneficiaries to have the benefits within Medicare when they're provided by a, a licensed doctor of chiropractic.

And that, as we all know, they only cover three codes for our entire scope of practice, even though we can provide a whole host of other services that, that would typically be covered under Medicare. Where we're at now, though, is we've evolved and grown to the point where we're, uh, doing everything we can to address not just that access issue, but also the other issues that the profession faces and, and trying to make, uh, those issues, uh, politically viable and, and popular as, as well, and to help move all of those things forward, um, in the best path, um, uh, we can.

So, um, that's the part where now that we've-- we're collaborating, we can talk about those other issues too, and, and that's where our, you know, our board... We've actually met as a board, both of us, uh, back in, uh, February at, um, at Parker. And so, you know, we have been talking about this for a long time, but it's, it's just taken this, uh, amount of time to come to a point now where we have an opportunity in front of us to possibly get all those, uh, goals accomplished.

Dr. Joe Betz

What Kris was saying, working together on, on Medicare, it's, it's been, um, an evolutionary process over the last 12 months. I mean, it was just sitting down and talking in the beginning was, was groundbreaking in and of itself.

But, um, now, you know, we, we actually, Kris and I communicate regularly, um, every week, and, and so we're... And our, our boards are getting the feedback from, from our meetings and our discussions. And so it's been, um, it's been definitely a very exciting time. Um, but it's, it, it does grind along slowly. It's, uh, everything changes very slowly.

It's a slow-paced process, and that's where, uh, the frustration, I think, comes in for the profession. They want it done now, so

Host Jon Kec, DC

I don't wanna gloss over that one piece too, and y- you mentioned it, right? is, this is new ground, having y'all in the same room, having y'all supporting the same thing. I, you know, I, I am a, a baby in the profession, I think, compared to y'all. Um, but I know even when I got started, uh, at national there was, there was SACAA and there was the student ICA chapter, and they didn't necessarily play well together, right?

They, philosophically we, we didn't align. And the fact that we've all been able to finally come together and align behind something like this is huge. So what would y'all say the spark was that really made that happen?

Dr. Kris Anderson

Gosh, I honestly, I think it's just the, the timing. The, the external, uh, pressures that the whole profession faces. We know that we have to get some wins for the profession. Uh, it's, it's been a long time coming. We've been pushing this boulder up the mountain, uh, for so long and, uh, you know, from the ACA's perspective, you know, being able to grow that coalition to, to maybe not have our arms wrapped so tightly around the main issues and, and then to welcome everyone else's input and then, and then have the effort, uh, collectively pushing forward.

You know, this is just a real pivotal time for the profession. So I think because we're facing those external challenges, those pressures, it, it makes a lot of sense for us to come together. We're able to focus on the things that we agree on instead of maybe, um, holding firm on per- on perspectives that, that maybe weren't as different as we thought in the past.

And I, I like to tell people that, you know, we agree on the most important thing and it's that more people need to see their chiropractor and more people need to see a chiropractor first. And we need to do everything we can as leaders in the profession to make sure that that can happen

Host Jon Kec, DC

How have the ACA, ICA, any other organizations and groups that have really been integral in this process, how have y'all come together and, and collaborated, and, and what has that really meant for, beyond just the bills, meant for the profession as, as a whole?

Dr. Joe Betz

One really important collaboration that, that I definitely wanna bring up is the fact that we have been working, um, closely with Make America Healthy Again, the, the, the non-profit side of Make America Healthy Again, MAHA. And, um, we actually, know, even, even signed a, a memorandum of understanding, our, our three organizations together, on how we wanna row this boat forward together. And, um, everything from our messaging and, and goals and, and so forth. So, um, you know, the MAHA, particularly the MAHA Chiropractic Hub, they formed a chiropractic hub, an entity within MAHA dedicated to chiropractic. It's been a hu- valuable, important, um, collaboration in this effort because they've got a, a massive national voice. Um, they've got connections in Washington that, that have helped en- enormously, and they, they have a, a great knowledge base, um, that's assisted our organizations. So that's been very important and, um, within the profession, we've, we've been meeting, um, through the Chiropractic Summit, which is just a... I forget the phrase they like to use.

There's definitely a phrase they like, but it's a kind of a collaborative meeting, a sharing of, of whatever all the organizations are working on. Um, and the summit's been really integral as well 'cause it gives us the opportunity to keep the, the broader profession informed as to where we're at and what we're working on, um, with Medicare and, and a lot of other projects as well. And so that's, those things have been very important. And within the summit is, um, where a lot of the private industry groups come in and have helped support these processes like NCMIC, um, and, and others. And they, um, give valuable input, um, and valuable direction, and, um, and always are offering support wherever they can.

So all of it fits together and honestly, none of this would be able to move forward without all of these pieces kinda coming together

Dr. Kris Anderson

Yeah, I think, uh, I'll share from my perspective the evolution of this process, Jon. It's been, you know, Joe and I met for the first time just over a year ago and, and we started speaking regularly and, and, you know, eventually got to a point where we brought our boards together. And, you know, we talked about the ideas, uh, you know, and our perspectives from the past.

And then we, we started to bring, you know, other groups, you know, from summit partners and others into the conversation. And, and at the ACA, we knew, uh, legislatively that it was really critical to get support from the administration for, uh, moving the, the Chiropractic Medicare Modernization Bill forward.

So, you know, we're reaching out to, you know, connections that we have. So it, it's, it's been a rollercoaster. I'll, I'll just be, uh, frank about that, where, you know, it started just with the two of us talking and then suddenly we're bringing other people in, and then w- we, we start to kinda normalize our, our ideas around the concepts that in the past we may have had different perspectives on.

And then, you know, people started to ask, "Well, is this, is this real? Are you guys really gonna do this?" And, and it was, you know, engagement through the summit with, with MAHA and leaders there. It was engagement from other summit partners who brought, you know, their time, talent and treasures to this discussion too, and were able to help MAHA stand up that chiropractic hub.

And it's been, you know, that, um, memorandum of understanding that we just executed on July 1st. So things move, um, very slowly until they move very quickly But since that time, it has really been an, a whole profession, uh, all hands on deck, uh, push for us to be able to, you know, bring the message that, that we have been able to, um, land on over this period of time to the whole profession.

And, and people now-- It's been exciting to see people actually trust that, yes, you know, Joe and I get along, and yes, our organizations are working together, and yes, you know, we're committed to seeing this through. And, and unfortunately, like Joe mentioned a little bit ago, it, a lot of this is now reliant upon whether Congress moves this forward.

And, and while we hope to be part of a, a large healthcare package that moves, you know, we all know that it may be the case politically that they're not able to, to move a large healthcare package through before the end of this Congress. Uh, that would be, um, I think, a really frustrating thing for all of us.

Uh, but part of this rollercoaster ride, you know, we've had some lows where we thought we were gonna get a victory, and then suddenly it, it didn't deliver like we expected. So, you know, Joe and I have, have felt those at times, and, and our boards have. But, uh, I'm optimistic that even if we can't get this passed this Congress, this, you know, this-- I, I think this is the best opportunity we've ever had.

Uh, we're in a great position to move forward as a profession to, uh, try to get this accomplished in the next Congress together. So, you know, it, it's really been, uh, quite a journey, and it's amazing that it's only been, uh, just shortly over 12 months since we really even met. Um, but, you know, a-a-and Joe mentioned it, we have, you know, NCMIC and a lot of other folks out there advocating for a bill.

A-And it, it's scary if you're an organization who's never really participated in, in that kind of, uh, political endeavor before. But ultimately, it's just so important for the profession. I think everyone sees the writing on the wall that, that we all have to push together. And, and I think it's, uh, our two organizations coming together that's given everyone permission to do that.

Host Jon Kec, DC

I've got a few things I wanna dive into from there. So I'm gonna, I'm gonna throw it to y'all. Tell me where you wanna start. so MAHA, the memorandum of understanding, or you mentioned this may not go through, so next steps. Which of those three? Where do we wa- where do we wanna begin?

Dr. Joe Betz

We don't, we can't get into too many details on the memorandum of understanding, but we can, uh ...

can't share it detailed, so we don't wanna go there and then not get anywhere. But, um,

Host Jon Kec, DC

Maybe can you tell me just what that means?

Dr. Joe Betz

mm-hmm

Host Jon Kec, DC

what the memorandum truly means globally when you look at all three organizations being involved and signing off

Dr. Kris Anderson

yeah, I think, you know, the one thing for us that we heard from the Chiropractic Hub, the folks at MAHA, was that having a formalized agreement that we're all gonna work together on getting, um, this bill passed and forwarding the issues that we-- that still remain, uh, currently not in the bill but are important.

You know, we knew we needed support from the administration, and it was important to, to MAHA that we had something in writing so that they could put the full force of the administration behind, you know, our efforts. Uh, they didn't want to get involved in this specific political issue and then have us, you know, per-perhaps disagree or go in different directions, um, as we came, came to the end of this Congress.

And so what we were able to deliver by e-entering into that agreement is that, you know, our-- the Secretary of Health and Human Services made a public statement that they wanna do everything they can to bring parity in federal programs to the profession. And it was really that message that we, you know, at the ACA, we were hoping to deliver that kind of support from the administration to-- so that Congress understands that we do have that support and that they should take our issue, uh, seriously as a priority to get it in- at least included in any kind of healthcare bill they deliver.

You know, and subsequently, we've, we've heard the same message delivered from the f- the former, um, governor from Delaware, you know, sharing some of her experiences, uh, implementing chiropractic into their Medicaid program, you know, very clearly understands that this is about access and affordability. And, and so this is a bipartisan, you know, issue, and it, it really is that agreement to, to formalize our effort together that has helped deliver those messages publicly.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Let's talk MAHA while we're here a little bit. I, by no means, am trying to make this a political thing. I, it's, I honestly don't ... I wanna stay away from that as much as we can. But I do think that that may bring up some, some angst for people, right? And right or wrong doesn't matter. The message I really wanna get across is the fact that this is a very powerful group that is, is behind chiropractic at this point, right?

This is a huge thing, and, you know, where regardless of where people fall in that spectrum, this is somebody who's stepped up and said, "This is important. Chiropractic is important." It sh- They've, they've seen the value. They understand where we're going. And I'm, I'm hopeful any perspective y'all can share for people that, that may have some, heartburn potentially about that.

Because let me ask this. They're not asking for anything from us, are they? From the profession, I should say. MAHA hasn't come to us and said, "Oh, this is what we need from you." They're not attaching this to any other initiatives where they're trying to ... You know, everybody always gets afraid that, that, that the government's just gonna slip this onto some other bill, and all the other stuff they want passed will just kind of be in there.

That's not happening here, right?

Dr. Joe Betz

They, they've, they've, they've been very forthright. I mean, every... Like for example, the Chiropractic Hub is being, you know, kind of stood up by the profession, so we're... You know, they're largely, they're driven by donations. They're a non-profit, so we...

Host Jon Kec, DC

Okay

Dr. Joe Betz

The donations that have come in directed towards the Chiropractic Hub, uh, 100% of that, that money is used for the Chiropractic Hub and for the efforts that they're putting forward towards the chiropractic issue. And so that's a really important thing because it, they, they might be working on other things that maybe some people don't agree with, but, um, that's not really where we're focused and where our efforts are. Our efforts are solely on issue and so forth. Um, they will be propping up other, um, professions, um, you know, alternative health, you know, complementary health types of professions and, and creating these hubs, um, within MAHA. We're the first one, and they plan on doing others, maybe in acupuncture and, and naturopathy or homeopathy and so forth. And so hopefully we will be able to collaborate, you know, with them as, as, being outside of, you know, traditional Western medicine and working together. But, but that's, that's way down the road. Um, right now chiropractic is their main one, and that's where we're focusing all of our efforts.

Dr. Kris Anderson

Yeah, and that's, it, it's a s- a sensitive area for sure, Jon. You know, as our organizations are, uh, essentially we're, we're nonpartisan professional societies. We're advocating for the profession, you know, despite, you know, um, you know, what party a member of Congress may be from. You know, and, and we're, we're partnering in this case with an organization that is, is partisan at this point.

You know, but ultimately, as Joe pointed out, you know, their interest is in supporting us, and, you know, the resources we put into, um, you know, their organization are meant to, uh, support

that effort. And so we've benefited a great deal, uh, from their influence, from the reach of their message, and also from the expertise that, that their people behind the scenes, uh, bring to this.

So it, it's really helped us, uh, coalesce around the ideas and the way we, we present the message. And, and like I mentioned before with the, the former governor of Delaware, you know, they are not, um, they are bipartisan. There are definitely people who are on the Democratic side of the aisle who are within the MAHA Coalition, and in this case, you know, both sides of, of the aisle support our issue because it is bipartisan.

It's a popular bipartisan bill, and we're fortunate to have a, a, what is a growing coalition in support of our issues

Host Jon Kec, DC

Well, that is great to hear. I hope everybody out here, or out there, excuse me, um, hears that as well, that this, this is a chiropractic issue. Let's keep it that, right? Let's, let's focus on what we're all here to do. other stuff, you know, not, not telling anybody how to feel on that, but keep it focused on chiropractic.

That's where we wanna be. Okay, last of the three questions then from, from that little chunk of conversation. You mentioned this may not go through under this Congress. So what's our timeline on that? When does this Congress, uh, adjourn or transition over? 'Cause I know midterms are coming up. And then if that doesn't happen, what's next?

Dr. Kris Anderson

Yeah, the current timeline, you know, we're recording, not to, not to date the recording, but it'll be out soon. You know, our Congress is, is not in Washington, DC right now, um, actively legislating. They're, they're, um, postponing any additional work until after the election. And it, it will be during that time, uh, which is typically referred to as the lame duck.

Uh, but in this case that- that's a five-week timeframe that we could potentially see a lot of legislation that's been sitting on the sideline, and we're, we're not alone in that regard. There are a lot of important healthcare bills. There are a lot of other bills that are important that still need to move out of Congress.

So, you know, our opportunity in that lame duck, uh, session is making sure that we, during this time when members of Congress are back in their home districts, you know, we remain, uh, focused on, on that kind of advocacy, making sure we're getting in touch with members and staff to make sure that this is an issue that's top of mind.

And that's what, you know, I generally, uh, share with different audiences when we have a chance to meet with them. You know, you don't have to be an ACA or an ICA member, you don't have to, um, support, uh, the Maha Chiropractical. But, uh, just as an American participant in democracy, go to your member of Congress and let them know that this is the most important issue to you or it is a very important issue to you.

And, and make sure that they understand that you're a constituent and this is an important issue. That's still a really critical part of the process. And so, you know, we hope that during that lame duck session up until, um, you know, the end of the calendar year, it can still happen. December 11th is a really important date because that's currently where our funding for the government, uh, expires, so we expect there to be something, um, moving before that date.

Um, but even if healthcare doesn't get done in this session, you know, we have, uh, a lot of support, like I said, a popular bipartisan bill. We'll have new members of Congress to reach out

to. Uh, there could be some, some shuffling around or some shakeups, uh, you know, in the administration after the, the new year when we start the next Congress.

But ultimately, I, I think where we stand now is we've, we've talked about all these issues. We've come together and we're working together. We've seen the benefit of working together, especially when it comes to messaging and getting support from a lot of the rest of the profession. So, you know, we're, uh, at this Congress, we did not start off two years ago in this position working so closely together on these issues.

And so, uh, regardless of what happens in this Congress, we're in a really good position as a profession to begin working together right away, uh, in the new year if, if that's necessary. And even if, you know, it's not Medicare, we're still gonna be working together on the other issues that we still face in the profession.

Th- this isn't, um, you know, the, the solution to all of our problems, uh, this one bill. So we still have a lot we can work on together, and we expect to be able to do that

Host Jon Kec, DC

Dr. Betts, you'd mentioned the process, right? And, and of course, I mean, I, I have no direct, um, experience, I guess, with the legislative process other than everything you hear on the news, that it takes God knows how long to pass a bill just to keep the government alive. Uh, but, know, I think g- is there anything specifically that you could kinda point to that's been a, a, a slowdown that wasn't necessarily chiropractic related or, or, know, ACIC related? give people kind of a peek behind the curtain of the, the actual process of, of getting this thing off the ground and then keeping it moving going forward

Dr. Joe Betz

I mean, a big part of the process has been us getting together and working, but the, um... even, even with us working, we've said this to the, to the profession at large, even if we come together and agree 100% on there's still massive obstacles, um, in the process of legislation passing. Um, chiropractic's a small profession.

Um, we're, we're largely underfunded, um, politically and, and research and everything else. And so, um, trying to get, you know, the ear of the politicians, um, to finally take us seriously, um, on Capitol Hill and listen to what we have to say is, is part of the challenge. Um, because we haven't had a cohesive profession-wide effort like this before, or at least not in, in my tenure, in my years involved. And so, um, it's, it's new for them too, and getting them to realize, hey, we are rowing a boat together this time, and, um, trying to get them to, to listen to what we're saying and be responsive, that's really... it takes a lot of time for that. And then there's just the procedural parts. For example, any bill that's gonna impact Medicare, there's generally, you need a Congressional Budget Office score, a CBO score, on the fiscal impact of, of the bill and how it's going to affect the budget. And, and getting something like that done has proven to be, um, extremely difficult and time-consuming. So there's all these procedural obstacles that stand in the way as well. And, and these things evolve literally on a weekly basis, and so we're seeing things happen and, and change, you know, uh, um, every week.

And, and some of those things are small minor things, but we need to pivot at that moment, um, in time and, and change our messaging and, and so it makes it quite complex. And thank goodness, you know, we have great rapport and we're in regular communication so we can be responding in the same way

Host Jon Kec, DC

So you, you mentioned kind of making legislators more aware of chiropractic. I think we've, we often hear that, you know, such a small percentage of the population utilizes a chiropractor. There are definitely some misnomers out there about who we are, what we do, how qualified and trained we can be.

Did you run up against that with legislators? Did you have to educate them on chiropractic as well and kinda change some, some predisposition or bias there?

Dr. Kris Anderson

You know, we're fortunate in our state where I'm from in North Dakota, the Senate bill that we have is primarily sponsored by our, uh, junior senator, Kevin Cramer. And we've had a working relationship with Senator Cramer in our state for more than a decade now. And the, the very first time we met with him, he spoke glowingly about his experience as a chiropractic patient.

And so when we have, you know, those types of members of Congress advocating for what we do because they understand what we do, that helps immensely. But as you pointed out and, and as we all can, um, assume to be true, even in Congress, there are, you know, biases against, you know, chiropractors and the profession and, you know, those, those, uh, misconceptions about who we are and what we do and, and even the misunderstanding about how Medicare treats us.

You know, those are common conversations where we're educating members of Congress and not just the mem- not just the members, but staff in their offices because s- they're so critical to how things are done in Washington, DC. So those are very common conversations actually to, to level set, you know, where the profession is, what we can, you know, do, um, and what we provide to patients, and how we can be a solution to some of the biggest problems we still face in, in healthcare, which is, uh, you know, the cost issue.

But we definitely have strong advocates who are chiropractic patients who understand our profession, you know, there in Washington helping us with that.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Let's talk Medicare modernization for a little bit. So I think you kinda mentioned it before, right? We are, are very... There, there's very minimal opportunity for reimbursement currently. That's obviously one of the big things driving this. But why is this, this movement for Medicare modernization so important to the profession right now, and what impact do you think it's gonna have on the, on the typical chiropractic office if, and I'm gonna say when, it passes?

Dr. Joe Betz

I mean, Medicare, it- it's more than just our seniors, um, getting access to chiropractic care. This, this is one of the things. You have to remember, we do only get paid for three services, the, the spinal adjustments. And uh, requirement for us to be able to do that is we have to demonstrate it either through an exam or X-rays, but those aren't reimbursed. And so that creates this artificial barrier for a senior to be able to, to get an adjustment, even as the system sits now. Um, so it's, it's partly breaking down these barriers, um, of access. Um, and it's also, you know, trying to a, a situation where, uh, these seniors can get access to more services that they wouldn't normally have from a chiropractor but they can get at other providers that, um, that chiropractors commonly perform.

So these are the things that we would see a benefit for, for the, for the patient. Um, and obviously it's, it's... it really is all about patient and patient access. Um, but chiropractors would obviously get the benefit of having patients not have these barriers to care, and so they may have more seniors being able to come in and, and access chiropractic care in their, in their offices. So this would be, you know, one of the large benefits directly. But as we know, you know,

as things go in Medicare, they go throughout the rest of the insurance world. And so we would hope that breaking down these barriers to access in Medicare would, would stimulate breaking down barriers of access throughout other levels of government and, and, and, uh, service programs, as well as even into private insurance industries.

So that's... it's really a, a, a web of effects that we would hope it would have trickling down into the profession

Host Jon Kec, DC

You mentioned currently the three codes. If this goes through in its current form, what does that open up? What else beyond just the exam, X-ray would we see offices potentially being able to be reimbursed for?

Dr. Kris Anderson

You know, as it stands, you know, the, the way it's, uh, designed to, uh, affect the profession is that whatever your state scope allows, if it's a benefit in Medicare, then you would be able to be reimbursed for it when you deliver those services to a Medicare beneficiary. Uh, you know, that's the, the main, you know, effect that we would see right away.

Um, I, I think it opens up a lot of op- other opportunities as well in different practice models, so not just in fee-for-service, which most of us in our, in our private clinics operate within. But, you know, other in, uh, practice environments have opportunities to participate in value-based arrangements, and those are the types of programs that because we only get reimbursed for three codes, we fall far, uh, under the, under the thresholds that currently exist and under the radar for most of these value-based programs.

Where if we can partner and integrate even from the settings where we currently exist with other healthcare provider teams and in other programs, it gives us an opportunity not just to be paid on fee-for-service, but to realize the actual value we generate by, uh, preventing, uh, or limiting those very low-value services that we see when, when escalating care occurs, when patients don't have access to chiropractic services, so they choose something else, and they end up with a- additional unnecessary prescriptions or maybe surgeries that we could have delayed or even prevented if they had access to chiropractic services sooner.

Host Jon Kec, DC

So it sounds like if this doesn't happen during this Congress, we can, in essence, pick it up where it is and just continue on as the next session begins

Dr. Kris Anderson

That's our hope

Dr. Joe Betz

I would add that I, I still believe even though the timeline is, it seems like we're against, against the door and we're talking about next session, but I honestly think the chance of this bill passing before the end of the year is, is better right now than it was three months ago, six months ago, a year ago. I, I really do believe we're in a great position still even though we have this, this deadline. And, and chips just keep falling in place. Now, the chips have fallen over over the last 12 months a few times too, but they kind of have gotten restacked and, um, but the chips are still falling in place. And so I really do think we have a great chance.

But like, like Kris said, I think we've built a great foundation. Um, we know, you know, where we wanna go and where we wanna be um, the, the, the dialogue has already been, you know, set. Um, the work and, and everything has been, been largely done. And so we would be able to hit the ground running in January if, if it comes down to that

Host Jon Kec, DC

So whether it's over the next five weeks, and Dr. Anderson, you kind of touched on this, but over the next five weeks, if this does get into January, over the next however many months it may take, what do we as a profession and individuals within that profession, do we do? What can we help? What do you need from us?

Dr. Kris Anderson

I think the, the main thing is keep delivering great care to your patients. If you're, uh, in active practice, just keep doing your, doing your work. That is first and foremost the, the, um, ace up our sleeve is that we are very, very popular as healthcare providers, uh, as, as professionals in healthcare. And at, at some point in the future, you know, we haven't, uh, done this as well as we would like to at the ACA especially, uh, but mobilizing our patients and making sure that their voices are heard and, and, you know, to address these issues.

So, you know, that's the, the first and foremost just if you're in practice, keep doing what you're doing. Support your state associations, you know, support your national associations. You know, be involved as much as you can. Uh, maybe stretch a little bit further as, as this opportunity sits right in front of us.

If you've never reached out to a member of Congress before, maybe try to do that. Um, go to, you know, any of the places where you can, uh, pretty quickly fill in your information and be in touch with your member of Congress. You know, go do that if you've never tried that before. But, but ultimately keep doing what you do in your practice, delivering great care, and then, um, make sure people understand that this is an important issue.

So, you know, sharing that message out is, is really important too. But if you have, um, an interest in, in being, you know, a bigger part of this, then, you know, absolutely reach out to our organizations. Um, you know, anybody that-- It, it's not that hard to, uh, get in touch with, you know, someone who's a leader in the profession.

We're, we're a small enough profession that if you wanna be involved, there's plenty of opportunity. So that remains, um, there as well. So and, and ultimately, like I mentioned, you know, NCMIC has been an excellent supporter of the profession and, and has done a lot in this movement in particular as well.

And so, you know, we welcome more of the same, just advocating, uh, for the issues and, and sharing their support of the work we're doing together now.

Host Jon Kec, DC

you mentioned kind of reaching out, getting in contact with members of Congress, your local leadership. When you're having those conversations, we kinda touched on this before, they may not really understand chiropractic. They may have absolutely no experience as a chiropractic patient. What have y'all found to be the most convincing, impassioned things that you can bring up and say to them that really helps them understand who we are, what we do, and, and flips that switch?

Dr. Joe Betz

You know, we, we, I was in Washington not long ago and, uh, we went and, and, and kind of hit the Hill and started meeting with some, some, some folks, and there were wide perspectives with... It's the staff generally. Like Kris said, it's, you're not usually meeting with the congressperson themselves. Um, we, we did a few, but mostly you're meeting with staff.

And, and so the staff have varying experience and knowledge for sure of chiropractic. Um, we had one staff person, for example, he was y- Most of them are really young, it makes me feel old. But, um, the, uh, the s- And they're super knowledgeable and they're great, but, um, they're just, they're just young. And, um, he said, "Oh, I've never been to a chiropractor before, but man, my mom just absolutely loves her chiropractor, and, and rants and raves about how great it is, so someday, you know, I look forward to getting to a chiropractor too." And so we, we build on that knowledge that they have. You have to meet them wherever they're at. Some of them have, have no experience, they don't know how to spell it. They have no idea that we're a doctorate level, you know, provider, healthcare provider, and so, so we have a little bit more work to do. But it's, it's no different than explaining it to a patient, explaining it to the public. And so it's kind of the same thing when a doctor, um, decides to kind of approach Congress. They're gonna meet with these staffers that it's a lot like, you know, meeting somebody in the public and explaining what chiropractic is. That conversation might be that, that level. And, um, and that conversation is comfortable 'cause we've all had it before

Dr. Kris Anderson

One of the other real benefits we have in the current landscape is that the scientific research now supports what we do in a way that even when I first started to practice, we didn't have the level of evidence available in, in, uh, peer-reviewed literature that supports what we do. So I, I like to say that, you know, for the history of our profession, for, for more than 125 years, we've had a really compelling story, and there are plenty of people who are willing to share that as, as patients and their experiences.

But, you know, we really do have the highest level of clinical evidence, clinical guidelines that feature what we do first. And so, you know, if you are familiar with that information, you know, that's something that you can share that, that this isn't just, you know, things that happen in, you know, behind closed doors in our office and then, you know, they, they come out into the public as, as some sort of miraculous event.

You know, we have a lot of good science that supports what we do, and we're, we're a trusted and effective part of healthcare teams. And, and be confident in that if you are advocating outside of, of the profession with other stakeholders that the best medical evidence, uh, demonstrates and recommends that, you know, we should be the first, uh, provider seen if someone has, you know, a new case of any kind of spine-related disorder or other pain condition

Host Jon Kec, DC

With that, you know, y- you kind of talked about a CBO score before. Is that kinda what you're referencing here, that that CBO score based off the research shows the government that we are, uh, financially responsible, I guess we'll say?

Dr. Kris Anderson

Yeah, C-CBO, if, if you know something about CBO, Jon, you might be the only one. Uh, it, it's an opaque, it's an opaque... No, I, I, no, I-- That, that's just, uh, kind of a, a point to say that, that not, not many people really understand how CBO does their work. And, you know, we couldn't explain it because the process they use is, is again, like I said, kind of opaque.

And so we definitely supplied them with all the best, uh, research evidence that we could on cost-effectiveness, on outcomes, and things of that nature. And the way they, uh, try to represent, uh, the legislation and how the le- the impact of the legislation on the Medicare

program, in particular, it doesn't, uh, take into account, uh, certain things that we would absolutely consider critical.

And, you know, we think this would be a cost savings Medicare program because you're preventing some of these, uh, you know, escalating, uh, care issues that we see routinely where people get, you know, unnecessary prescriptions and unnecessary surgeries. Those are, those are big value, uh, cost savings in the system, but those aren't the sort of things that CBO considers when they're scoring a bill.

So, you know, while we can make that compelling argument, they don't consider some of those things as part of their scoring process, so, uh, it can, it can, um, skew the number. And it actually, you know, has led to, you know, significant criticism of their process by members of Congress. So, you know, some members are, are more concerned about a CBO score than others.

Um, it's still a requirement, um, to be able to move, you know, some of this forward or at least a, a really important part of the process for most. But yeah, it isn't exactly a one-to-one with, uh, the research evidence and how it, how it could impact the program

Host Jon Kec, DC

So we, we've talked a bit about being a doctor, getting involved, what we can do. We've talked a little bit about how organizational partners, NCMIC and others, have been involved and what we can do. I think we probably have some students listening, at least I hope we do. Um, they're in a bit of a different position, right?

They, they may not be as comfortable having that conversation because they don't know how to explain chiropractic just yet. They haven't done it 1,000 times to people on the streets, people in their office, whatever it may be. can somebody in their position, maybe even a first-trimester student just starting out, how can they get involved?

Dr. Joe Betz

Well, I mean, one thing you gotta remember about the political process is the, the politicians and their staff are used to having, you know, the public just coming in and talking to them and meeting in, in these public hall meetings and so forth. So I, I don't think a student should ever feel like they, they don't have enough knowledge or confidence to go in and talk with their legislators.

They're used to, um, they're used to that, and they're comfortable with it. And I think a, a chiropractic student brings a very unique and very important perspective. They're, they're the future of healthcare, and going in and just having that, that frank conversation like, "We need these barriers broken down so our seniors can access chiropractors more easily," it's a very easy message to be able to deliver. And, um, and I think that kind of a message from a student's a, a really powerful thing. So that's, I think, one thing that students can do. And nowadays in the electronic age, like Kris mentioned, you go type your information in these places. They have these different legislative trackers that you can go to, and, and, and you, uh, you literally just put where you live and your name, and it crafts an email.

It finds your legislator for you, so you can just electronically communicate with, uh, the office. And they're usually very good about, um, acknowledging receipt of that communication, and you can reply to them and have more of an electronic communication, which everybody's used to. So it doesn't have to be an in-person discussion at, um, their local offices or anything even.

It can just be electronic. But I think that goes a long way for students, um, and it's a big way for them to help

Dr. Kris Anderson

: And there's definitely opportunity too for students if, if they wanna reach out. You know, both of our organizations have student chapters and, you know, state associations have s- have student chapters. So if, you know, that, that first trimester student, uh, that when you don't know what you don't know, you know, reach out and, and at least get involved and, and, and tap into those resources, whether it's ACA, ICA, the, uh, state association where you may plan to practice or where your school is located.

Start to consume the information and educate yourself on the issues. And it-- when there are opportunities to go, uh, in a mentor kind of, uh, role or mentee role, there are definitely opportunities to join those meetings. So if you have someone, you know, back home, for instance, that you know is, uh, participating in this and they, they might, uh, meet with the member of Congress from your district routinely, just ask if you can, you know, participate in that or tag along at some point.

You know, those sorts of things where you, you get introduced to it, uh, by attending. Uh, that, that's-- those opportunities exist. You might have to seek those out, be a little more proactive with it. But that'd be my recommendation as well is, is just get connected with organizations like ours who are doing this work

Host Jon Kec, DC

Can I put you both on the spot for a second? If there is a student, a 20-year veteran, another vendor out there who's looking for somebody to talk to about how to get involved, can they reach out to both of you?

Dr. Kris Anderson

Yeah, I, I know. I, I'm available

Dr. Joe Betz

Absolutely, yeah. No, that's always great. It's great to talk to, to anybody in the profession or anybody who's concerned. It's always good to answer questions

Host Jon Kec, DC

Well let's, let's look a little, little forward. This goes through, this has some time to, to set its legs, work through all the other things that the ICA and ACA are working on. 10, 15, 20 years down the line, we're a fully modernized profession. What does that mean? What does that look like? What does our scope look like?

What does access look like? How do we function within the larger healthcare system with the initiatives y'all are trying to work through?

Dr. Kris Anderson

Either one of us really wants to try to predict the future that far in advance, it looks like. But, uh, you know, I'll say, that, um, you know, I, I think more than, more than anything, I think our, our conversation demonstrates that what we really want as a profession, we don't want special treatment.

We don't wanna be treated differently. We wanted... We, we've always, um, wanted to, you know, be considered as, you know, a high-value part of the healthcare delivery system. And, you know, whether we have to, uh, change to become part of that, you know, my perspective is that I would like to see technology not be a barrier to practice, but a facilitator in practice.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Absolutely

Dr. Kris Anderson

I don't have an interest, um, to be integrated by having to be hired away from my practice. I would like to stay in my private practice and have the tools available to communicate with the rest of the healthcare team so that they understand the things that are happening to patients in my office that, that we share.

Um, you know, I, I don't want us as a profession to have to lose that identity where we're out, uh, in the community, uh, doing a, you know, really, um, great work and helping people. You know, that, that would be the thing that to me that, um, I, I wanna emphasize, that this isn't about, um, getting swallowed up by all of healthcare because we suddenly have parity in the way Medicare pays for our services and then other programs.

I, I think we have a really important role and an important identity, and I don't want us to sacrifice that in pursuit of just fair treatment

Dr. Joe Betz

We're, we're not asking, know, the government or anybody else to force people to go to chiropractors. We just want to break down the barriers that exist between the, the, the patient and us that doesn't exist between the patient and other providers. Um, it's, it's unreasonable, um, to put those burdens on, on the public, um, to be able to access chiropractic care.

So, um, fairness really is the main thing, and that, that fairness is really the word parity, and that's what, uh, Secretary Kennedy spoke about at his speech that circulated around, um, I forget how long ago, maybe a couple months ago now. Um, it- it's about creating a, an even system. um, if we can achieve that, I think we'll see the chiropractic profession grow and flourish, um, because people, people love chiropractic care, and they respond well to it. Um, we... Like Kris was saying, we have the research now, the clinical evidence that is showing that, and, um, that's starting to become more widely accepted, um, within the broader medical community. And, uh, they don't have a lot of great answers for people with, with spinal problems, and they don't have a lot of great answers for, for chronic disease.

And people need to take their health into their own hands and be able to make, uh, make decisions without these impediments to getting access. So I've... Hopefully, that's what we would see five, 10 years down the road, is a system that's a little more free for the patients to be able to access the care that they want

Host Jon Kec, DC

As we wrap up, I wanna give each of you the chance to anything that's on your mind, whatever you wanna leave with our listeners, right? Whether it's a, you know, another discussion on what they can do. It's, it's where we're going, it's what you're hoping for. But your f- the floor is yours, gentlemen.

Whatever you'd like to leave with our listeners, feel free

Dr. Kris Anderson

First and give Joe the last word, I just want to say thanks to you, John, and to NCMIC. You know, all the other, um, you know, partners across the profession, you know, people from outside the profession now. It-- This is a growing coalition in support of the issue that, that we need parity across federal programs, that this is, uh, a profession that for too long has been minimized or marginalized.

And i-it's very exciting to be, uh, in this position, uh, as the president of the ACA, uh, at this time and seeing this all come together. So I-I'm sincerely grateful to everyone who's, who's, uh, been part of this and continues to be part of this. There's lots of room to continue to be part of this if you're, if you're not on board yet.

But, you know, that, that's just the sentiment I wanna share is how grateful I am to see everybody, uh, pushing on this together.

Dr. Joe Betz

Kris hit the net, the nail on the head here with, with thanking the, um, the profession at large. All the organizations are now working together. Like really we... I haven't seen in my care- I've been in chiropractic politics for, for o- over 20 years, and I've, I've not been, um, a witness to the profession rowing the boat together like this, um, in the past.

And so it's a unique opportunity for us just not to get Medicare done, but a whole lot of things. We, we're working on a lot of things. Today was great to talk about Medicare. We'll have to come back on and talk about all the other things some other day. but the, the next step in that is provider support for what all of the organizations are doing, they need to step up, and they need to be active.

Um, so when there are calls to action, seems like an email is a little thing that maybe won't do anything, but they, they pile up, and they make a huge difference. And so responding to those calls to action, whether they're coming from ACA or ICA or, or MAHA or NCMIC, um, responding to those calls to action is extremely important. Um, when there are calls for support, um, is, is, is enormous. Um, doctors stepping up and supporting this process and understanding it's gonna take time, um, it's, it's an important part of getting this whole thing done. Um, we're not gonna be done even if Medicare passes this year. We have, we have things that are cooking for next year already. And so, um, we're gonna be getting a lot of things done over the next few years. I'm really excited to be a part of it

Host Jon Kec, DC

Well, let's do the next episode teaser, right? What's beyond Medicare?

Dr. Kris Anderson

Well, there's a lot of, a lot of issues in, in federal programs as far as parity is concerned. So, you know, being able to address, you know, some of the, uh, student loan issues, you know, opening up the profession to participate in some of the federal programs that grant forgiveness over a short period of time, um, including chiropractic services in the military and, uh, I could go on and on and on.

Um, you know, the, the 2706 provision within the Affordable Care Act that, uh, requires, uh, parity that we haven't realized its full implementation as intended. Um, I... Joe, go ahead. There's a lot

Dr. Joe Betz

Those are, those are, those are all things. I mean, it, there's a lot of things that we're, we're, we're trying to do, and honestly, Medicare is probably the hardest one out of all of them 'cause it's gotta go through legislative process. But some of these other things are regulatory changes. We're hoping that they're, um, easier to get resolved than, than the legislative one with Medicare where we need this change, um, in the law. And so these things are... We have a list, I can't remember how many things, but there's probably eight or nine different categories of things we're focused on. But it's all about trying to create access and create a level playing field, and trying to, to, to allow patients to get access to chiropractic care across the spectrum, um, throughout the country

Host Jon Kec, DC

Well, would love to absolutely have that conversation. I think y'all bring such a unique perspective because you have such visibility into all of that kind of stuff. I mean, as a, as a doctor in, in an office, I'm sure I, I know 1% of 1%, so any- anything we can do to kind of get that message out there is always welcome with me.

Um, maybe just a little bit on some of those other programs. Is any of that currently happening right now, or is all that kinda on hold while we figure out the Medicare stuff?

Dr. Kris Anderson

Yeah, that's one of the things the, the, uh, administrative issues. You know, that's something, uh, our, um, collaboration with MAHA and our, our, our connection through them with Secretary Kennedy in particular and Administrator Oz, you know, there are some administrative issues that we're hoping can, um, be addressed, you know, without having to push legislation through.

But, but even, you know, believe it or not, even, even within the, the MAHA organization, the Chiropractic Hub, we, we still have limited resources. So, you know, we're focused on the most important thing at the moment. We, we do talk about those other things as well, uh, simultaneously. Uh, but just, you know, with the bandwidth of, for everyone that's involved, um, there, we push a little bit harder on certain things when we have opportunities, but ultimately it's, it's Medicare right now and making sure that we can, um, modernize coverage for, for chiropractic.

Host Jon Kec, DC

Thank you both so much for your time today, but also all the time you've put into this over the last year plus. The, the... Again, I, I can't, I, I, I can't come back to this enough, and I feel like I've come back to it too much already, but I don't care. Um, the fact that y'all are working together is amazing. I, I am so happy to see it, so happy to hear everything y'all are doing, the conversation, the perspective. So thank you for absolutely everything. It's been a pleasure talking with y'all today

Dr. Kris Anderson

Thanks for having us, Jon

Host Jon Kec, DC

what an absolute powerhouse of a conversation that was. A massive thank you again to Dr. Kris Anderson of the ACA and Dr. Joe Betz of the ICA for taking the time today to share a mic and

map out a unified future for chiropractic. Today proved that advocacy isn't just something happening in Washington, DC.

It impacts the identity, security, and the growth of your practice every day. Here's my challenge to you: don't let this conversation end when you hit stop. Reach out, get involved with your associations, support the profession, and take an active role in building the future of chiropractic. If you found this episode at all helpful, please be sure to subscribe and share this podcast with a colleague.

We're hoping this conversation can find its way into as many ears as possible. We're including links on how to contact the ACA and ICA in the show notes, plus how you can actually get involved yourself. If you're wanting to watch the video version of this podcast, you can find it on the NCMIC YouTube channel, and if you have any questions at all for the show or me, you can email me at jkec@ncmic.com thank you for listening. I'm Jon Kec, and this has been Chiropractical