

ICRS Report: In the Public Interest

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“You didn’t use exact words.” Any parent has heard this complaint before. So have teachers and health care professionals.

This is not lost on those in chiropractic regulation. How much definition should be in the overarching laws (statutes, acts) or the applicable regulations? Are Codes of Conduct embedded in law and therefore enforceable, or provided as reference by the professional associations? This varies substantially around the world.

Instructors in chiropractic educational programs have an additional challenge. More and more graduates are mobile: how exacting should instruction be? Can they teach to every requirement?

Now we add yet another task. For countries in the process of adopting or implementing regulatory legislation, how do they construct Goldilocks Laws: not too hard, not too soft, just right? And which concepts need to be tailored to the individual culture of a nation? The same questions must also be addressed by those with existing legislation; the law is not static.

Perhaps the starting point is studying what is universally in the public interest. Are certain principles intrinsically valued in every country? What constitutes “being a professional”? How do we determine what is good for the people?

Enter regulation: sometimes a convoluted, complex, and wordy beast that moves at glacial speed – and over time, generally gets it right. Each meeting, and each case, continues the evolutionary process of defining what is in the public interest.

That process can only happen by following a process of effective governance.

Eleven principles of effective governance were

recently developed by the Committee of Experts in Public Administration (CEPA) and endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council. They are grouped into three primary categories:

Effectiveness (competence, sound policy making, and collaboration)

Accountability (integrity, transparency, and independent oversight)

Inclusiveness (leaving no one behind, non-discrimination, participation, subsidiarity, and intergenerational equity)

Embracing the process of good governance in the public interest is hard. It requires exercising the seemingly conflicting attributes of flexibility matched by stoic, unwavering commitment to core values.

Regulators have contributed to remarkable changes over the past several decades. Legally, the requisite skills to be a chiropractor have changed: diagnostic imaging has supplanted X-ray, research demonstrates the efficacy of certain clinical applications, social values of inclusion gradually replace exclusion. Greater sensitivities to culture, gender, race, and economic strata have become part of the public conversation. Today’s examinations include ethics, not just the sciences and technique.

Cicero said, “The good of the people is the greatest law.” Surely this is the light we turn toward.

We invite you to join with the ICRS in the ongoing exploration of what is right, and good, and fair, as the world of chiropractic regulation continues to unfold. Our next 90-minute Zoom Forum is scheduled for 22/23 April and is open to anyone interested in regulation. Details at www.chiroregulation.org.