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A SURVEY OF CHIROPRACTORS ACCESS TO PERFORM PRE-PARTICIPATION EXAMINATIONS (PPEs)

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OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this survey is to determine if there is consistency across the United States in allowing chiropractors to perform pre-participation examinations.

METHODS: Addresses for both the state chiropractic boards (SBCs) and the state athletic associations (AAs) were located via the internet. A letter was generated and emailed to each state. The wording in the letters going to the state boards of chiropractic and athletic associations were altered appropriately. Return receipts were requested. If no answer was received within 2 weeks, a second request was sent. If two more weeks went by without a response, a phone call was placed to the individual. Results were then tallied into an Excel spreadsheet, including specific comments. Responses were received from all states.

RESULTS: 70% (35) of the chiropractic boards have policies allowing PPEs by DCs; 26% (13) have no policy; and 4% (2) specifically deny DCs to perform PPEs. 36% (18) AAs have policies allowing PPEs by DCs; 14% (7) leave the decision up to the local school boards; 42% (21) AAs specifically deny DCs; 4% (2) AAs have no policy; and 4% (2) have policies that require legal interpretation. Colorado uniquely requires the chiropractor to be "school physical certified". Oregon and Washington expressed concerns about the chiropractor's ability to detect cardiac pathologies. Washington has handled this by allowing chiropractors only to perform PPEs as part of a team. Rhode Island and Vermont have no PPE policy. Nevada declares the issue is under review. New Hampshire and Nebraska have policies subject to interpretation. The reason for some of the athletic associations refusing DC-performed PPEs is the issue regarding the DC's ability to detect cardio pathology/cardio-monitoring. They believe chiropractors do not know how to do this, or do not do it with enough regularity.

CONCLUSION: The ability for DCs to perform pre-participation examinations (PPEs) is determined by the policies of three entities: state Board of Chiropractic Examiners (BCE), state high school athletic associations (AA), and, at times, the local school board. There is inconsistency between the BCEs and the AAs, as a majority of BCEs permit chiropractic-performed PPEs, but only a fraction of state AAs allow them. Most state boards of chiropractic have a specific policy regarding PPEs. Those state boards allowing chiropractors to do PPEs consider it "within the scope of practice" based on the fact that physical examinations were taught in chiropractic college. While a chiropractic board will permit a PPE to be performed by a chiropractor, it may not always be accepted by the school requesting the exam. The state's school athletic associations can override the state board decisions. Unfortunately there is not always consistency between the two. And, a local school board can override the athletic associations' decision. There are state athletic associations that have devised specific methods and guidelines to handle their individual concerns.