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CHIROPRACTOR

A PUBLICATION OF THE GEORGIA CHIROPRACTIC ASSOCIATION

FALL 2026



114th Annual Fall Conference & Tradeshow

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October 16-18, 2026

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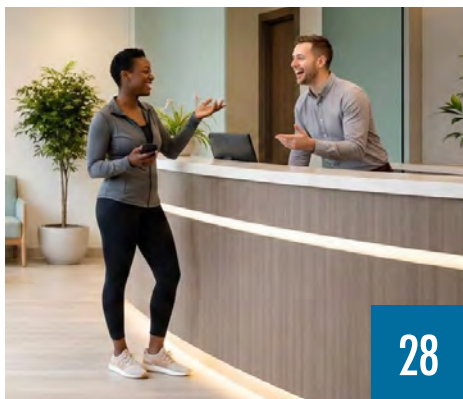
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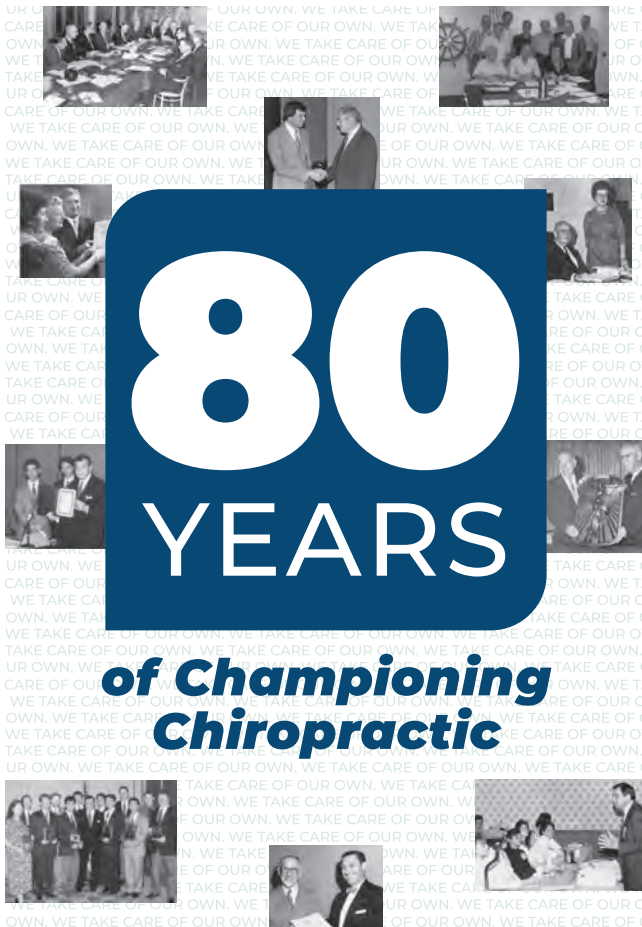
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EXECUTIVE INSIGHTS

Looking Forward With Lots on the Horizon!



2026 has been a packed year for GCA, and there is still so much more to come! Socials, Summer Conference, a new Women's Summit, and more... it's been a wonderful whirlwind! I am so excited about where the GCA is heading in the fourth quarter!

If you haven't heard the news, we are beginning to branch out with new subcommittees based on YOUR interests. Our first fully formed and active committee is the GCA Sports Committee. Chaired by Dr. Ray Gaskey, this committee is working hard to bring more information, education, and opportunities to our DCs who focus on working with athletes.

The Sports Committee will be hosting a Sports Chiropractic Summit on Thursday, October 15, ahead of our upcoming 114th Fall Conference, featuring a four-hour, hands-on technique course with Dr. Mitch Mally. The class will focus on new techniques for sports chiropractors, and students who are interested in pursuing more opportunities in the sports world are encouraged to sign up!

Directly following the seminar, you'll have the opportunity to network and mingle with members of the GCA Sports Committee over light bites and drinks, right there at the Hotel Avalon. It's a great chance to learn, connect, and meet others who share your interests.

Attendees at this year's Fall Conference will also have the opportunity to discuss the results of our legislative survey at our Annual GCA-PAC Meeting. Those survey results will serve as a guideline for the upcoming legislative year. Be sure to check out the article in this magazine that dives deeper into those results.

Our lobbying team, Peachtree Government Relations, will be around throughout the entire weekend, so take the time to meet them and talk about the issues that are important to you and your practice.

We are also exploring what it would take for chiropractors to become certified to practice animal chiropractic in Georgia. We have started a committee for those interested in working with animals, and we are looking at legislation

and directives from other states to help make this journey a little smoother for us here in Georgia.

We've talked about dry needling, PIP, insurance disparities, and other important issues. But as a small staff, we can only chase after—and move the needle on—the areas that **YOU tell us matter most.**

That's where you come in.

The GCA can make a difference with more members, but we need more than membership alone. We need **active members** who join committees, share ideas, get involved, and help us carve out the path forward.

The GCA staff and Board are open to making positive changes that advance chiropractic and protect your ability to practice here in the great state of Georgia. If you are interested in getting involved, reach out to me at the GCA office. I would be happy to help you find a committee or event that fits your interests.

And if we don't already have a committee for something you're passionate about, let's talk! Chances are, there may be other DCs who want the GCA to pursue the same thing.

Lastly, if you have peers who can't attend the Fall Conference but still need their continuing education credits, please encourage them to join us for our Winter Conference, December 11-12. We'll be trialing a condensed format, with two 10-hour days at Maggiano's in Buckhead. This format frees up your Sunday while still allowing you to earn all those hours ahead of the deadline for license renewal.

Membership has its benefits, and this is the new GCA. We are carving out the path forward for chiropractic in Georgia, and I hope you'll join us for the ride.

Sincerely,



Stephani Tucker
Executive Director

Georgia Chiropractic Association

Together, United: A Time for Leadership and Opportunity



The chiropractic profession stands at an important moment in its history. Throughout every period of change, our profession has demonstrated resilience, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to improving the health of our patients. Today is no different.

As the healthcare landscape continues to evolve, we are presented with new opportunities to strengthen the role of Doctors of Chiropractic within our nation's healthcare system. Recent discussions at the federal level regarding enforcement of Section 2706 of the Affordable Care Act's anti-discrimination provisions, payment parity for chiropractic physicians, and modernization of Medicare have renewed optimism throughout our profession. These conversations represent meaningful opportunities to improve patient access and recognize the value that Doctors of Chiropractic provide every day.

While policies and legislation continue to develop, one thing remains certain: meaningful progress is most likely when our profession speaks with a united voice.

Regardless of your practice model—whether you focus on wellness care, family practice, sports chiropractic, personal injury, pediatrics, rehabilitation, integrated healthcare, or any other specialty—we all benefit from legislation and policies that reduce unnecessary restrictions, expand patient access, and promote fair reimbursement for services provided by qualified Doctors of Chiropractic.

These are not issues that benefit only one segment of our profession. They benefit every chiropractor, every practice, and most importantly, every patient we serve.

When barriers to care are reduced, patients receive greater access to conservative, evidence-informed healthcare. Communities benefit from increased healthcare choices, improved patient satisfaction, cost-effective treatment options, and successful clinical outcomes. Our profession benefits

when patients can receive the right care from the right provider at the right time.

As chiropractors, we may differ in our techniques, philosophies, and business models. Those differences make our profession stronger. However, when it comes to advancing chiropractic through sound public policy, professional advocacy, and patient access, we share far more common ground than differences.

Now is the time to demonstrate leadership.

Now is the time to support legislation that advances our profession.

Now is the time to work together for the future of chiropractic.

The Georgia Chiropractic Association remains committed to advocating for every Doctor of Chiropractic in Georgia. Through legislative advocacy, professional education, and member engagement, we continue working to protect our profession while creating opportunities for future generations of chiropractors.

I encourage every chiropractor in Georgia to become actively involved. Your membership, your voice, and your participation matter.

Together, we can strengthen our profession.
Together, we can expand access to chiropractic care.
Together, we can shape the future of healthcare.

Join the Georgia Chiropractic Association and help us move the chiropractic profession forward.

Together. United.



Dr. Winston Carhee, DC
President
Georgia Chiropractic Association

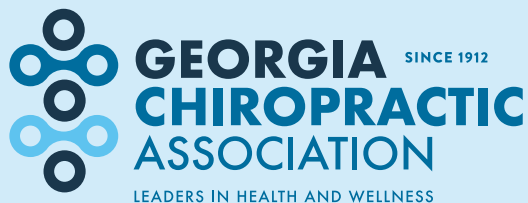
Medicare Coverage Modernization Act

You may be aware of the recent announcement that the American Chiropractic Association (ACA) and the International Chiropractors Association (ICA) have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to support a single Medicare bill with proposed amendments.



The ChiroCongress Board of Directors recently met and unanimously voted to provide advocacy resources and tools for member organizations that choose to support this legislative effort. The current bill contains the same language as in previous congressional sessions, for which ChiroCongress also provided advocacy resources and support.

If you would like to support this initiative, ChiroCongress has created an Advocacy Center to help you take action and get involved.



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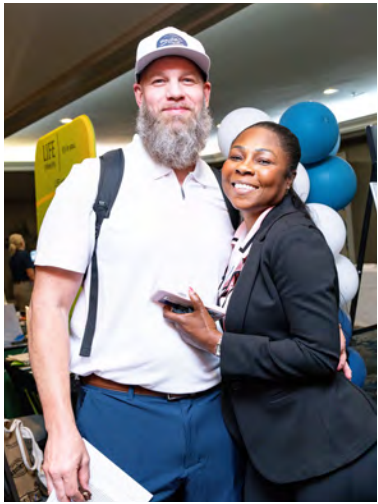
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GCA's 2026 Summer Conference & Tradeshow in Savannah was SPECTACULAR!





Over 130 DCs joined us for the weekend as we enjoyed a packed tradeshow hall filled with products and services designed to enhance and support practices, stimulating continuing education seminars, delicious meals, fantastic receptions, and more!

We invite you to join us next year back in Savannah **June 4-6!**



114th Annual Fall Conference & Tradeshow

Hotel at Avalon - Alpharetta
October 16 - 18, 2026



Registration Now Open!

- CE Class Registration (20, 15, 12, 8, or 5 CE)
- GCA Welcome Mix & Mingle on Friday evening
- A light breakfast Friday, Saturday, and Sunday
- Lunch included on Friday and Saturday
- GCA Annual Meeting
- GCA-PAC Annual Meeting
- Saturday evening GCA-PAC Reception
- CPR Class Available (additional purchase)
- Access to the Exhibit Hall
- And more!



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- ✓ **C.A. Workshop with Sarah Shapiro, Owner, Healthcare Hiring Solutions**
- ✓ **X-Ray Safety Certification with Regina A. Watkins, RT (R), ARRT**



C.A.s and office staff are invited to attend our full Fall Conference weekend! For those who wish to register for a single course, please contact the GCA office directly.

C.A. and Office Staff Weekend Registration: \$300

GCA SPORTS CHIROPRACTIC SUMMIT

NEW FOR 2026

Thursday, October 15, before the GCA Fall Conference begins, GCA's Sports Committee is proud to offer a one-day seminar specifically for DC's specializing in sports, featuring Dr. Mitch Mally!

- **Mastering the Foot & Ankle (4 CE - Clinical)**
 - Hands-On Technique for Precision Diagnosis & Treatment - \$199 per person
- **Sports Chiro Reception**
 - Enjoy drinks & lite bites while learning more about the GCA Sports Committee's goals and plans for the future of sports chiropractic in Georgia!



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Learn More!**



GCA Sports Chiropractic Summit Sponsored By:



The Future of Sports Chiropractic in Georgia Starts Here

How the Georgia Chiropractic Association Sports Committee is Elevating a Specialty, Uniting a Profession, and Expanding Opportunities for Chiropractors Across the State.

By **Dr. Ray Gaskey, DC, CCSP**

Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician –
American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians



“When sports chiropractors unite, we don’t just strengthen a specialty—we elevate the entire chiropractic profession.”

Walk onto the sidelines of a championship football game, into the medical tent of an endurance race, or behind the scenes at an elite athletic competition, and you’ll increasingly find chiropractors serving alongside physicians, athletic trainers, physical therapists, massage therapists, and strength and conditioning professionals. Their role extends far beyond spinal manipulation—they are evaluating injuries, improving movement, assisting with emergency sideline care, applying kinesiology tape, directing rehabilitation, helping determine return-to-play decisions, and keeping athletes performing at their highest level.

Yet despite the growing recognition of sports chiropractic throughout the world of athletics, sports chiropractors represent only **approximately 2.5% of the chiropractic profession**. That small percentage represents an enormous opportunity.

Recognizing the need for stronger leadership and a unified vision, the **Georgia Chiropractic Association** established the **GCA Sports Committee** to become the leading voice for sports chiropractic in our state. Our mission is simple but ambitious: **to empower, organize, and advance sports chiropractors while strengthening statewide recognition of chiropractic as an essential component of sports medicine.**

A Specialty Worth Strengthening

Sports chiropractic is more than treating athletic injuries. It is a commitment to advanced education, evidence-informed practice, multidisciplinary collaboration, and helping athletes perform at their highest level.

The GCA Sports Committee believes Georgia should become a national leader in sports chiropractic. To achieve that vision, we are working to establish recommended educational stan-

dards and credentialing pathways that recognize chiropractors who have pursued advanced postgraduate sports medicine training. By encouraging nationally recognized certifications such as the **Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician® (CCSP®)** and **Diplomate of the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians® (DACBSP®)**, we can promote consistency, professionalism, and confidence in our specialty.

Our Vision

To make Georgia the national model for excellence in sports chiropractic through leadership, education, collaboration, and advocacy. Our long-term vision is to create a trusted statewide network of sports chiropractors recognized by athletes, coaches, schools, universities, physicians, athletic trainers, and sports organizations as leaders in conservative musculoskeletal care.

Building Opportunities Across Georgia

The GCA Sports Committee is focused on creating meaningful opportunities for sports chiropractors throughout the state.

Among our strategic priorities are:

- Developing a statewide referral network connecting qualified sports chiropractors.
- Encouraging advanced education and professional credentialing.
- Creating mentorship opportunities for students and early-career doctors.
- Expanding relationships with schools, universities, sports organizations, and event directors.
- Increasing opportunities for paid athletic event coverage.
- Advocating for fair compensation and greater professional recognition.
- Promoting collaboration between chiropractors and other sports medicine professionals.
- Elevating public awareness of sports chiropractic throughout Georgia.

Together, these initiatives will strengthen our specialty while improving access to qualified sports chiropractors for athletes across Georgia.

Sports Chiropractic on the World Stage

Sports chiropractic has become an integral part of modern sports medicine.

Today, chiropractors serve athletes from youth leagues to the highest levels of international competition. Organizations including the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee, National Football League, National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer, and the Professional Golfers' Association Tour have all incorporated chiropractic care into athlete health and performance programs.

Elite athletes such as Tiger Woods, Tom Brady, Usain Bolt, and Michael Phelps have publicly acknowledged chiropractic care as an important part of maintaining peak performance.

As research supporting conservative musculoskeletal care continues to expand, sports chiropractors are increasingly recognized as valuable members of integrated sports medicine teams throughout the world.

Join the Movement

The GCA Sports Committee is chaired by **Dr. Ray Gaskey, DC, CCSP®**, who is board certified as a **Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician®** through the **American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians**. Under his leadership, the committee is committed to creating new opportunities for chiropractors while advancing the profession through education, mentorship, advocacy, and collaboration.

Whether you currently hold a sports chiropractic certification, are pursuing advanced training, or simply have a passion for working with athletes, **there is a place for you on the GCA Sports Committee**. Your involvement can help shape the future of sports chiropractic in Georgia while opening doors for professional growth, leadership, networking, and service.

The future of sports chiropractic will not be built by one practitioner—it will be built by a community of chiropractors committed to excellence.

We invite you to join us. Together, we can elevate our profession, strengthen our specialty, and ensure that every athlete in Georgia has access to exceptional chiropractic care.

What Makes a Sports Chiropractor Different?

Every licensed chiropractor is trained to diagnose and manage musculoskeletal conditions. A sports chiropractor builds upon that foundation through advanced postgraduate education focused on the unique demands of athletic performance.

Sports Chiropractors Receive Additional Training In:

- Sports injury evaluation and management
- Emergency sideline and event coverage
- Functional movement assessment
- Biomechanics and performance optimization
- Rehabilitation and corrective exercise
- Kinesiology taping and sports taping techniques
- Concussion recognition and return-to-play considerations
- Strength and conditioning principles
- Injury prevention strategies

Sports chiropractors don't simply help athletes recover from injury—they help them move better, compete better, and stay healthy throughout their athletic careers.



Georgia Chiropractic Association at the State Capitol

By John Haliburton

Thrash-Haliburton Government Affairs

The 2026 Georgia General Assembly came to an official close on their session on April 2.

HB 970 did not pass. HB 970 was introduced and passed the House and passed out of the Senate Rules Committee but never made it out of the Senate before the last day of session on Thursday. It expanded which healthcare professionals may conduct preparticipation physical examinations and requires healthcare professionals to include a cardiovascular prescreening as part of such examinations. There was an effort on the morning of GCA's lobby day in early February to add chiropractors to the legislation, but it was determined by legislative counsel and the author of the bill that it wouldn't be possible to do this.

Some school systems in Georgia still allow chiropractors to conduct sports physicals in their districts. This legislation did not change that. There are some school systems in Georgia that do not allow chiropractors to conduct sports physicals. Its up to each school district on approving it or not, and it is a local issue.

The Georgia High School Association has banned it in their rules, so that has to get changed in the future also. So far GHSA has said no to that. The author and others said early on in session that Chiropractors couldn't be added to it due to the cardio requirements, GHSA's rule, and more. As mentioned, the bill did not pass.

The author of HB 970 has said he'll work with GCA's government affairs team in 2027 to attempt to pass legislation next session that would allow chiropractors to conduct sports physicals.

We successfully worked with Rep. Karen Mathiak to strip the language out of HB 323 in the Senate Insurance Committee at the end of session and replace it with the language from HB

170! HB 323 passed out of the Senate Rules Committee last week, March 30, thanks to the help of Lt Governor Burt Jones. We tried to get it called up for a vote on the Senate floor before the end of April 2 but it never had a vote unfortunately. It would have needed to then go back to the House for an agree or disagree vote for final passage, if the Senate were to have passed it. They simply ran out of time. Especially after things fell apart between the House and Senate on a dispute with property tax reductions, voting system changes, and more. They ended the session early after those disputes, which affected pending legislation at that time.

HB 170 was introduced by Rep. Karen Mathiak in the 2025 legislative session. It passed the House Insurance Committee but didn't make it out of the House Rules Committee by Crossover Day in 2025! It provides for transparency in medical billing for chiropractors, physicians, patients, and all stakeholders on procedures and billing. It did not make it out of the House Rules Committee by Crossover Day, so we successfully put it on HB 323 and passed it out of the Senate Insurance Committee.

Rep. Mathiak and Rep Anissa Jones, both chiropractors, and our government affairs team, Thrash-Haliburton, met on this legislation, strategy, and with the Insurance Commissioner's Office (at the direction of the House Insurance Committee Chairman). We'll work on this again in the 2027 session, if GCA leadership wants our team to.

HB 1088 was also introduced, and it puts the definition of a Chiropractor in the same language at the State level as it is at the Federal level. It did not make it out of the House Health Committee.

The Speaker of the House and House leadership passed Insurance Reform in the 2026 session, after the House had a study committee hold several study committee hearings throughout 2025 until December 2025 focused on looking at insurance

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Senate Bill 411 from Senator Shawn Still did not pass. It provides for dry needling to be performed by certain licensed professionals, restricts certain representations and advertisements related to the performance of dry needling, provides for education and training requirements for occupational therapists to perform dry needling, provides for disciplinary action, and training requirements for acupuncturists.

There has also been interest from some GCA members to look at animal treatment. We act at the association leadership's direction on all of these matters and requests and provide guidance, consultation, and help.

GCA's very important Lobby Day was on February 10 at the State Capitol! Thanks to all who attended to represent our industry and association! They were able to hear from Georgia's political leadership invited by our government affairs firm of Thrash-Haliburton about what is going on at the Capitol, talk about issues important to our industry, take pictures, and more. Many also met with their local House and Senate members, saw the legislature in session, and were recognized by the House!

As was mentioned, the 2026 Georgia General Assembly ended on April 2! Georgia's Legislature operates on a biennial process, so 2026 has been the second year of the process for 2025-2026. The General Assembly just finished a special session from June 17 - June 24, where they took up a bill to preserve the current voting system for a few more years and attempt to replace it during that time. They also attempted to pass bills to replace property tax with a local option sales tax, but those all failed to get a 2/3 majority required for those types of bills in each chamber.

The Primary Elections in Georgia are now over. The U.S. Senate will see Democrat incumbent Jon Ossoff face Republican Mike Collins. The Governor's race will see Democrat Keisha Lance Bottoms face Republican Rick Jackson. The Lt Governor's race will see Democrat Josh McLaurin face Republican Greg Dolezal. There will be other races also such as U.S. House, Attorney General, Insurance Commissioner, Agricultural Commissioner, other statewide races, Georgia House and Senate races, and more.

Our team is acting at the association's direction on all legislation and issues, and we will provide further updates in the future.

Here's to a great year for our industry for the rest of 2026 and in 2027 at the State Capitol!

PAC UPDATE



Everyone Can Make a Difference: A Message from the GCA PAC

The GCA Summer Conference in Savannah was a tremendous success, with a wonderful turnout and an inspiring show of support for our Political Action Committee.

Thanks to the generosity of our members, sponsors, and donors, we raised more than \$8,000 for the GCA PAC!

Our popular Bourbon Pull was sponsored by attorney Harry W. Brown during the PAC Reception. Our basket fundraiser was also made possible through the generous support of Dr. Mary Watkins, attorney Samuel Johnson, and Inspire Orthopedics. We sincerely thank each of these valued donors for their continued commitment to the chiropractic profession.

Every contribution—whether through a donation, volunteering, attending an event, or building a relationship with a legislator—helps strengthen our collective voice. Everyone can make a difference.

We look forward to seeing you at our next PAC Reception on Saturday, October 17, at 5:30 p.m. at The Hotel at Avalon. Please join us for another enjoyable evening of fellowship, fundraising, and support for the future of chiropractic in Georgia.

While attending the Fall Conference, please also make plans to participate in the annual PAC meeting. Check the conference

schedule for the meeting time and location. We are also seeking volunteers to assist with our fundraising activities throughout the conference. If you would like to help, please contact me or the GCA office.

We are pleased to announce that Peachtree Government Relations will serve as our lobbying firm for the 2027 legislative session. Laura Norton, vice president of the Atlanta-based firm, brings extensive experience in Georgia legislative affairs and lobbying. Laura will attend our Fall Conference, so please take a moment to introduce yourself and welcome her to our GCA family.

Before the next legislative session begins in January, I encourage every member to contact their state legislators and begin building a relationship with them. The time to get acquainted is now, while legislators are more available and open to meeting with their constituents. A personal connection can make a meaningful difference when important chiropractic issues come before the Georgia General Assembly.

It is my sincere honor to lead our PAC. Thank you for placing your trust in me and for continuing to support our efforts on behalf of Georgia's chiropractic profession. I look forward to seeing you at the Fall Conference.



Dr. Leana Kart
GCA PAC Chair



GCA PAC

Georgia Chiropractic Association Political Action Committee



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What Chiropractors Want from Their State Association: Legislative Survey Reveals Clear Priorities

By GCA Government Affairs Committee



As healthcare continues to evolve, so do the expectations placed on chiropractors. A recent legislative survey conducted among attendees at the GCA Summer Conference and a digital survey sent out in June 2026 provides a valuable snapshot of what practicing doctors of chiropractic believe should be the profession's top legislative priorities over the next several years here in Georgia. Although the survey reflected a 35% response rate, the results reveal remarkably consistent themes that can help shape advocacy efforts moving forward.

Insurance Reform Tops the Agenda

When respondents were asked which state legislative issues should receive the highest priority over the next 12 to 24 months, insurance reimbursement and parity ranked well above every other issue. The message from practicing chiropractors is clear: ensuring fair reimbursement is essential to the long-term sustainability of chiropractic practices.

The importance of reimbursement reform was reinforced later in the survey, where most respondents rated improving insurance reimbursement and enforcing parity laws as “extremely important.”

For many chiropractors, inadequate reimbursement doesn't simply affect practice revenue—it directly impacts patient access to care. When insurance benefits fail to cover treatment adequately, patients often delay or discontinue care because of increasing out-of-pocket costs.

A Profession Ready for Expanded Scope

Scope of practice emerged as the second major priority, with respondents expressing strong support for expanding chiropractic services while protecting existing rights.

Among the most frequently requested additions were:

- Dry needling
- Acupuncture
- Animal chiropractic
- MRI ordering or expanded imaging authority
- Recognition as primary care providers

- Expanded diagnostic and therapeutic services, including laboratory testing and peptide therapy
- Referral authority to specialists
- High school sports physicals

Dry needling generated the greatest number of responses, making it the single most requested scope expansion among survey participants. Respondents also emphasized protecting chiropractic manipulation from encroachment by other professions, particularly physical therapists performing spinal manipulation after limited training.

These responses suggest chiropractors are looking beyond maintaining the status quo. They want legislation that reflects the growing education, clinical expertise, and role of today's chiropractic physician.

Administrative Barriers Continue to Frustrate Practices

The survey also highlighted the growing administrative burden placed on chiropractic offices.

Prior authorization requirements were identified as the most significant regulatory obstacle affecting the ability to practice. Documentation mandates and insurance regulations followed closely behind.

These administrative requirements create delays in treatment, increase staff workload, and divert valuable time away from patient care.

Legislative efforts aimed at reducing unnecessary prior authorizations and streamlining regulatory processes would likely receive broad support throughout the profession.

Patient Access Remains a Central Concern

Perhaps the most compelling findings came from the open-ended responses regarding barriers patients face.

Respondents repeatedly identified:

- Prior authorization delays
- Third-party gatekeeping
- High deductibles and copays
- Limited Medicare coverage
- Medicaid limitations
- Visit restrictions
- Billing and coding rules that prevent combining appropriate therapies
- Low insurance reimbursement that forces patients toward cash payment options

These responses paint a picture of a healthcare system where administrative and financial barriers—not clinical limitations—often determine whether patients receive appropriate chiropractic care.

Members Are Ready to Engage

One encouraging finding is the profession's willingness to participate in advocacy.

Many respondents indicated they would be willing to:

- Contact legislators
- Attend legislative days
- Share patient stories
- Provide testimony
- Participate in grassroots campaigns

Overall willingness to support the association's legislative agenda was high, with the majority indicating they were either "very willing" or "somewhat willing" to become involved. This represents an important opportunity for GCA members and Doctors of Chiropractic all over the state to build stronger grassroots advocacy efforts. And that is what we are aiming to do in the next 3 months in preparation for the 2027 legislative session.

What This Means for the Future

The survey results suggest that chiropractors are not asking for isolated legislative victories. Instead, they envision a comprehensive strategy focused on four interconnected priorities:

1. Reform insurance reimbursement and enforce parity laws.
2. Modernize and protect chiropractic scope of practice.
3. Improve patient access by removing unnecessary administrative barriers.
4. Simplify regulations that limit efficient, evidence-based care.

Taken together, these priorities reflect a profession seeking to better serve patients while strengthening its role within the healthcare system. Fair reimbursement, expanded clinical authority, and reduced bureaucratic obstacles are not merely practice management concerns—they represent opportunities to improve access, efficiency, and outcomes for the patients chiropractors serve every day.

GCA will be working hard to re-implement our grass roots campaign, host meetings in our districts that help you network with your local legislators and provide a provides a clear roadmap for you to get involved. Our members are asking for advocacy that not only protects the profession but also positions chiropractic for continued growth and greater integration into modern healthcare.

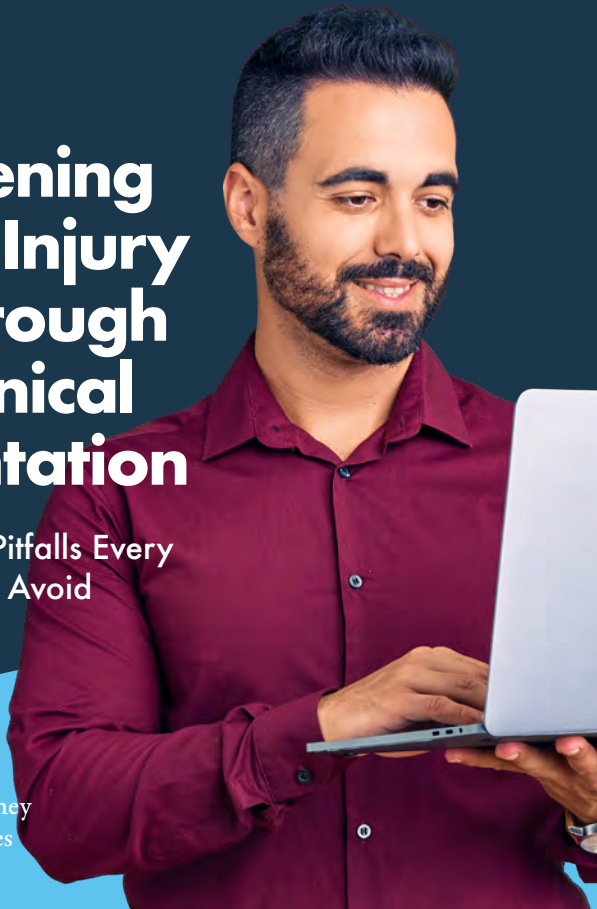
As members of the GCA, you can help us move all of that forward by registering for the grassroots campaign, joining our Government Relations committee, donating to our PAC and committing to coming to our Capitol Day in February 2027.

For more information or to discuss how you can get involved, reach out to me at stucker@gachiro.org.

Strengthening Personal Injury Cases Through Better Clinical Documentation

Ten Documentation Pitfalls Every Chiropractor Should Avoid

By **Samuel Johnson**
Founder & Managing Attorney
Samuel Johnson & Associates



If you've been treating patients injured in motor vehicle accidents for any length of time, you've probably noticed something interesting: two patients can experience very similar injuries, receive similar treatment, and recover at a similar pace—yet their personal injury cases may have very different outcomes.

Why?

In many cases, the difference isn't the quality of the care. It's how well that care was documented.

As attorneys, we spend a great deal of time reviewing medical records. We rely on them to understand not only what injuries a patient sustained, but how those injuries affected the person's daily life, how they responded to treatment, and whether the care provided was medically appropriate. Insurance adjusters, defense attorneys, mediators, and, when necessary, juries all do the same thing. The medical record becomes the patient's story.

When that story is complete, consistent, and easy to follow, it allows everyone involved to understand the patient's recovery with confidence. When important details are missing, however, even excellent care may not be fully appreciated.

This article isn't intended to criticize documentation habits or suggest that chiropractors should write legal documents. Quite the opposite. The goal is simply to highlight a few common issues we frequently encounter when reviewing personal injury files and to offer practical suggestions that can make already good documentation even stronger.

1. Every Progress Note Should Move the Story Forward

Recovery after a car accident is rarely a straight line. Some patients improve steadily from week to week. Others feel significantly better for several days before experiencing increased pain after returning to work, lifting something heavy, or simply having a particularly active weekend.

New symptoms sometimes appear as the body begins to heal, while others gradually disappear. That's exactly what makes careful documentation so important. One of the most common weaknesses we see isn't poor treatment—it's progress notes that don't fully capture how the patient's condition changed over time. When every visit sounds almost identical to the last one, someone reviewing the records months later may have difficulty understanding the patient's actual recovery.

Instead, each note should answer a simple question: "What is different today?"

Perhaps headaches are less frequent. Maybe cervical stiffness has improved, but low back pain continues to interfere with sleep. Perhaps the patient can now drive for thirty minutes instead of fifteen before symptoms begin. Those details matter. They demonstrate that each visit involved an independent clinical

evaluation and help create a timeline that accurately reflects the patient's recovery. improved, but low back pain continues to interfere with sleep. Perhaps the patient can now drive for thirty minutes instead of fifteen before symptoms begin.

2. Objective Findings Give Clinical Observations Greater Weight

Patients tell us how they feel. Objective findings help explain why they feel that way. Both are essential.

Whenever possible, include measurable clinical findings that support your assessment. Range of motion measurements, orthopedic testing, neurological findings, muscle strength, sensory changes, and palpatory findings all contribute to a clearer clinical picture.

Simply documenting "restricted range of motion" provides limited information. Explaining how restricted it is—and documenting how those measurements improve over time—helps demonstrate measurable progress throughout treatment.

Objective findings also help bridge the gap between the patient's subjective complaints and the clinical decisions being made. They don't replace the patient's experience. They strengthen it.

3. Templates Are Helpful — But Individualized Notes Matter Even More

Every busy practice depends on efficiency. Electronic health records and documentation templates make it possible to spend more time treating patients and less time completing paperwork.

Used appropriately, they are valuable clinical tools. Problems arise only when templates begin telling the same story over and over again. No two appointments are exactly alike. Even if the treatment plan remains consistent, patients often report subtle improvements, temporary setbacks, new activities, or changing functional abilities.

Those small differences are worth documenting. From the perspective of someone reviewing the chart months later, individualized notes communicate something important: the patient was evaluated at every visit, and treatment decisions were based on that day's clinical presentation—not simply copied from the previous appointment. Sometimes just a few thoughtful sentences can add far more value than another page of repeated template language.

4. Help the Reader Understand How the Injury Changed the Patient's Life

Pain scales are useful. But they rarely tell the whole story. Imagine reading two different medical records.

The first simply states: "Neck pain: 7/10." The second explains that the patient can no longer comfortably drive their children to school, struggles to sit through a workday without changing positions, wakes up several times each night because of neck pain, and has stopped exercising altogether.

Which patient leaves a clearer impression? Functional limitations transform clinical findings into something everyone can understand. Whenever appropriate, document how the injury affects activities such as driving, sleeping, working, household responsibilities, childcare, recreation, or exercise.

These details help explain not only **how much** the patient hurts, but **how much the injury has changed their daily life**. For insurance professionals, attorneys, and jurors who may never meet the patient, that context is often invaluable.

5. Document Not Only What You Did — But Why You Did It

Good documentation records clinical decisions. Great documentation explains the reasoning behind them.

If diagnostic imaging is ordered, explain why it was appropriate. If imaging is not ordered because the patient's presentation doesn't indicate a need for it, document that reasoning as well.

The same principle applies to referrals. When a patient is referred to another provider, note what prompted the referral and, when possible, incorporate the results into subsequent treatment notes.

Months later, someone reviewing the record should be able to follow the clinical decision-making process without having to guess.

A complete clinical timeline doesn't simply document events. It explains the thinking behind them.

6. A Treatment Plan Should Tell the Reader Where You're Going

Every patient begins treatment with a destination in mind. Sometimes it's getting back to work. Sometimes it's sleeping through the night without pain. Sometimes it's simply being able to pick up a grandchild or return to the gym. Your treatment plan should reflect those goals.

Too often, records describe what treatment was provided but never explain what the treatment was intended to accomplish. Defining clear, measurable goals helps others understand the purpose behind your clinical decisions. Rather than simply documenting ongoing care, consider identifying goals such as improving cervical range of motion, reducing headache frequency, restoring lifting tolerance, or helping the patient return to normal daily activities.

As treatment progresses, revisit those goals. Has the patient achieved them? Are new goals appropriate? Has recovery slowed, requiring a change in approach? Treatment plans should evolve as patients do. That evolution tells an important part of the patient's story.

7. Don't Let the Last Visit Become an Afterthought

First impressions matter. So do last impressions. Many clinicians devote considerable attention to the initial examination—and understandably so. It establishes the diagnosis, documents the patient's condition, and creates the foundation for treatment.

The final visit deserves the same level of attention.

A thoughtful discharge summary provides closure to the clinical narrative. It allows anyone reviewing the record to understand not only where the patient began, but where they ultimately finished.

Consider addressing questions such as:

- How much has the patient improved?
- Which symptoms have resolved?
- Which symptoms, if any, remain?
- Has the patient returned to normal daily activities?
- Are additional treatments expected in the future?
- Has Maximum Medical Improvement been reached?

Without a meaningful conclusion, even an otherwise well-documented course of care can feel incomplete. A good discharge summary helps bring the entire record together.

8. Help the Reader Understand the Relationship Between the Accident and the Injury

One question appears in nearly every personal injury case:

Are the patient's injuries consistent with the accident being described? Answering that question doesn't require legal conclusions. It requires thoughtful clinical documentation.

Early in treatment, patients often describe how the collision occurred, where they were sitting, the direction of impact, whether airbags deployed, and when symptoms first appeared. Those details can become increasingly important as time passes.

Whenever appropriate, document:

- The patient's description of the accident.
- When symptoms first developed.
- Whether similar symptoms existed before the collision.
- Whether pre-existing conditions appear to have been aggravated.
- Whether today's clinical findings remain consistent with the patient's reported mechanism of injury.

Clear documentation creates a clinical timeline that allows others to understand the patient's condition without having to fill in missing pieces. Good documentation doesn't argue a case. It simply allows the facts to speak clearly.

9. Good Communication Benefits Everyone — Especially the Patient

Although chiropractors and attorneys have different professional responsibilities, they often share the same objective. They both want the patient to recover.

Throughout a personal injury case, attorneys frequently depend on treating providers for medical records, narrative reports, clarification regarding treatment, or updates on the patient's progress.

When communication is timely and records are complete, questions are answered more quickly, unnecessary delays are avoided, and the legal process tends to move more smoothly. Most importantly, patients benefit.

Strong communication also builds professional trust. Over time, healthcare providers and attorneys who work collaboratively develop a better understanding of each other's role, ultimately creating a better experience for the people they serve.

10. A Gap in Treatment Doesn't Always Mean a Gap in Recovery

One of the first things insurance companies often notice is a break in treatment. Sometimes those gaps are completely understandable. Patients travel. They become ill. Family responsibilities arise. Financial circumstances change. Occasionally, treatment pauses because the provider is waiting for diagnostic imaging or a specialist consultation. None of those situations are unusual. The problem occurs when the reason isn't documented.

Without context, someone reviewing the records months later may incorrectly assume the patient no longer needed treatment or that the injury had resolved. Fortunately, preventing that misunderstanding is often simple.

A brief explanation documenting why treatment was interrupted can provide important context and help preserve the continuity of the patient's clinical story.

Final Thoughts

When people think about documentation, it's easy to think of it as paperwork. In reality, it's much more than that.

Long after treatment has ended, the medical record may be the only voice that remains. It tells future healthcare providers where the patient started. It explains the clinical decisions that were made. And in personal injury cases, it often becomes the primary source others rely on to understand what the patient experienced.

That's a significant responsibility.

The good news is that outstanding documentation doesn't necessarily require longer notes. It requires thoughtful notes. Records that are clear, objective, individualized, and clinically meaningful don't just strengthen personal injury cases—they reflect excellent patient care. At the end of the day, that's something every healthcare professional can appreciate.

A Quick Documentation Self-Check

Before signing today's note, ask yourself a few simple questions:

- If someone unfamiliar with this patient read today's note six months from now, would they understand what changed since the last visit?
- Have I documented objective findings that support today's assessment?
- Have I described how the patient's injuries are affecting daily life?
- Is my clinical reasoning clear?
- Have I documented why today's treatment was appropriate?
- If there has been a change in the treatment plan, have I explained it?
- If there was a gap in care, have I documented the reason?
- Does today's note move the patient's story forward?

If the answer to those questions is "yes," chances are your documentation is doing exactly what it should: supporting quality patient care while creating a clear and credible clinical record.

About the Author

Samuel Johnson is the Founder and Managing Attorney of **Samuel Johnson & Associates**, an Atlanta-based law firm dedicated to representing individuals injured through the negligence of others.

Over the course of his career, Mr. Johnson has worked closely with healthcare providers across Georgia and has reviewed thousands of medical records in personal injury cases. That experience has reinforced a simple but important lesson: excellent medical care deserves excellent documentation.

He believes that clear, objective, and patient-centered clinical records not only strengthen personal injury claims, but also reflect the professionalism and clinical excellence of the providers who create them.

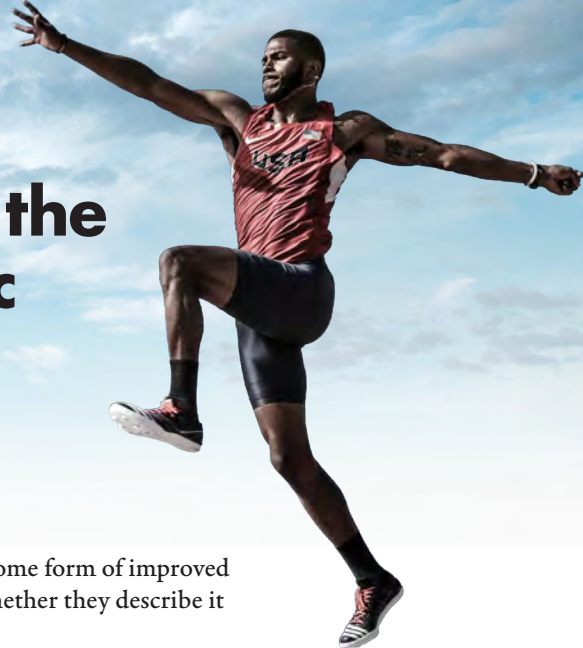
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Beyond Injury Care: Why Human Performance Is the Next Frontier for Chiropractic

By **Dr. Michael Clusserath**

Vice President of Chiropractic, Life University



For decades, Chiropractic has been recognized for its role in helping patients recover from pain, injury and physical dysfunction. While that work remains foundational to the profession, a growing opportunity exists beyond symptom management—helping individuals achieve and sustain their

highest levels of human performance.

This shift is not a departure from chiropractic's roots. In many ways, it is a return to them.

At its core, Chiropractic has long been concerned with optimizing the relationship between structure, function and the nervous system. Chiropractors have historically looked beyond symptoms to ask a broader question: How well is this person functioning? Today, that same question is finding new relevance in health care, athletics and wellness as more people seek proactive strategies to improve performance, resilience and quality of life.

When most people hear the word “performance,” they immediately think of elite athletes. Certainly, athletes represent an important part of the conversation. Professional, collegiate and youth sports organizations are increasingly embracing interdisciplinary healthcare teams that include chiropractors, athletic trainers, strength coaches, sport scientists, nutrition professionals and medical providers working together to support athlete health and performance.

However, performance is about much more than sports.

The executive who wants to maintain focus and energy throughout a demanding workday is pursuing performance. The first responder whose career depends on physical readiness is pursuing performance. The parent balancing work, family and personal responsibilities is pursuing performance. The older adult who wants to remain active, independent and engaged in life is pursuing performance.

In many ways, every patient who walks through a Chiropractic

office is seeking some form of improved performance—whether they describe it that way or not.

This broader understanding creates significant opportunities for the profession. Rather than limiting conversations to pain relief alone, chiropractors can help patients think about function, movement quality, adaptability and overall well-being. The goal becomes not simply helping someone feel better but helping them function better.

That distinction matters.

Pain is often what brings patients into our offices, but function is what ultimately determines how they participate in their lives. Two individuals may report similar levels of discomfort, yet have vastly different capacities to work, exercise, recover, focus or engage in activities they enjoy. By focusing on functional outcomes, chiropractors can help patients appreciate the broader value of care and develop a more proactive approach to their health.

This perspective is particularly important as health care continues to emphasize prevention, lifestyle factors and long-term wellness. Patients are increasingly looking for providers who can help them maintain health rather than simply respond to illness. Chiropractic is uniquely positioned to contribute to that conversation because the profession has long emphasized the body's innate capacity for adaptation, healing and optimal function.

For Doctors of Chiropractic, the implications extend beyond clinical outcomes. A performance-oriented mindset can also strengthen patient relationships and practice growth. When care is framed around helping patients accomplish meaningful goals—whether those goals involve sports, work, family life or healthy aging—patients often develop a deeper understanding of the value Chiropractic can provide.

The opportunities become even greater when Chiropractors collaborate with other professionals. Modern health care is increasingly team-based, and successful providers understand



how to work alongside other experts in service of the patient. Partnerships with athletic trainers, strength and conditioning professionals, physical therapists, physicians, nutritionists and other healthcare providers can help chiropractors contribute their unique expertise while participating in comprehensive care strategies.

Nowhere is this evolution more visible than in the growing field of Sports Chiropractic.

Today's athletes and active individuals are looking for healthcare providers who understand not only injury management, but also movement efficiency, performance optimization, recovery and resilience. They want practitioners who can evaluate the body as an integrated system and identify opportunities to improve performance before problems arise.

As Sports Chiropractic continues to grow, the profession has an opportunity to demonstrate its value in new and meaningful ways. Chiropractors who understand biomechanics, neurology, movement assessment and performance principles are increasingly finding themselves as important members of athletic and performance-focused healthcare teams.

Recognizing these trends, Life University has expanded its commitment to preparing future chiropractors for this evolving landscape. In the fall of 2026, the University is launching a dedicated Sports Chiropractic track within its flagship Doctor of Chiropractic program, designed to provide students with

enhanced education and practical experience in athletic performance and sports health care. The program will emphasize performance-focused care, nervous-system function, movement assessment and hands-on clinical experiences while leveraging Life University's unique environment of more than 650 varsity student-athletes across 20 intercollegiate sports.

While not every graduate will choose to work on the sidelines of a sporting event or with elite athletes, the principles that drive Sports Chiropractic are broadly applicable across patient populations. Whether serving athletes, business professionals, parents or retirees, chiropractors have an opportunity to help individuals optimize function, improve adaptability and express their fullest potential.

The future of Chiropractic will always include helping people recover from pain and injury. But perhaps the profession's greatest opportunity lies in helping people move beyond recovery altogether—to achieve higher levels of health, performance and quality of life.

That is a conversation worth leading. And it is one that Chiropractic is uniquely equipped to champion.

LIFE
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Interested in the future of Sports Chiropractic?
Learn more about Life University's new
Sports Chiropractic track within its Doctor
of Chiropractic program at life.edu/dsc.

Are You Charging What Workers' Compensation Allows?

By Dr. Ray Foxworth, DC, FICC



I was reviewing practice numbers with a chiropractor recently who was convinced workers' compensation patients just weren't profitable anymore. His collections seemed lower than they should have been, and like many doctors, he immediately assumed reimbursements had been cut again. But when we looked closer, we found something surprising. The problem wasn't the workers' compensation carrier. The problem was his fees.

Like many chiropractors, he had never taken the time to compare what he was charging to what his state's workers' compensation fee schedule actually allowed. For years, he had been billing significantly less than the maximum allowable reimbursement on many services. In other words, he wasn't being underpaid. He was undercharging. And he's not alone.

Recently, we analyzed workers' compensation fee schedules and clinic charges across 49 states. What we found was eye-opening. **More than 43% of all clinic charges reviewed were below the amount allowed by the state's workers' compensation fee schedule.** Nearly half the time, doctors were charging less than what the state had already determined to be reasonable and customary for those services.

In this sample alone, chiropractors left more than **\$99,000** in allowable revenue uncollected. On average, every time a doctor undercharged for a service, they gave up more than **\$45** that they were legally entitled to bill.

Think about that for a moment. How often do we talk about declining reimbursements while never checking whether our fees are aligned with the reimbursement schedules available to us? But what surprised me most wasn't where doctors were undercharging. It was what they were undercharging.

Many of us assume the biggest revenue opportunities are found in treatment codes. Yet our analysis found that the greatest financial losses were occurring during examinations and evaluations. Evaluation and Management (E&M) services were undercharged nearly **55% of the time**, substantially more

often than chiropractic manipulative treatment codes. Even more revealing, higher-level examination codes accounted for more than **83% of the total revenue lost** in the study. The greatest source of undercharging wasn't the adjustment. It was the doctor's expertise. It was the history, examination, clinical decision-making, diagnosis, and treatment planning that form the foundation of quality patient care.

How often do we hear chiropractors say they want to be recognized as portal-of-entry providers? Yet many of us are charging less than the state-allowed amount for the very services that demonstrate our diagnostic and clinical value.

Many chiropractors establish their fee schedules years ago and rarely revisit them. Meanwhile, workers' compensation fee schedules are updated, regulations change, and allowable amounts increase. If your office hasn't reviewed those schedules recently, there is a good chance you may be leaving money on the table.

This isn't about overcharging. It's about recognizing the value of the care we provide and making sure our fees reflect that value. At the very least, don't you think we should be charging what the insurance companies themselves believe our services are worth?

Workers' compensation systems are highly regulated. The allowable fees are established by law, regulation, or state-approved schedules. When you charge less than what is permitted, you are voluntarily reducing your revenue without creating any additional benefit for the injured worker, employer, or carrier. But here's what concerns me most. What we found in workers' compensation wasn't an isolated problem. It was evidence of a much larger trend.

Once we identify undercharging in workers' compensation cases, we often discover the same pattern throughout the practice. Fee schedules haven't been reviewed in years. Charges haven't kept pace with rising costs. Doctors are providing tremendous value but collecting less than they should because

nobody has stopped to evaluate whether their fees still reflect the care being delivered.

The undercharging we see in workers' compensation is often just the first sign of a larger issue: many chiropractors have grown accustomed to accepting less than the value they provide.

For years, our profession has faced declining reimbursements, increasing regulations, rising operating expenses, and growing administrative burdens. Somewhere along the way, many of us stopped asking an important question:

Do my fees reflect the value of the care I provide?

Not the highest fee.

Not the lowest fee.

The right fee.

Team compensation continues to rise. Technology costs continue to rise. Rent, supplies, software, compliance, and everyday business expenses continue to rise. Yet many practices are still operating from fee schedules that were established years ago and never revisited.

Ask yourself this: When was the last time you reviewed your fees—not just for workers' compensation, but across your entire practice? If you can't remember, it may be time.

A simple fee analysis can reveal opportunities to improve collections without seeing more patients, extending office hours, or adding new services. More importantly, it helps ensure that the value of your care is reflected in the fees you charge. For the record, we will never tell you what to charge, to raise or lower your fees. What we can do is show you where you are, and then you make the decision.

Workers' compensation may be where the problem becomes visible. But it may not be where the problem ends. After all, if the law allows it, your fees support it, and the value is there, why wouldn't you charge it?

Want to discover additional opportunities that successful practices use to strengthen profitability and compliance? Download our free white paper, **4 Overlooked Secrets of Successful Chiropractic Practices**. You'll learn practical strategies that can help you protect revenue, improve financial systems, and build a stronger practice for the future.

Dr. Ray Foxworth, DC, FICC, is the visionary behind ChiroHealthUSA, serving as its founder and CEO. With over 39 years of dedicated service in chiropractic care, Dr. Foxworth has navigated the complexities of billing, coding, documentation, and compliance firsthand.



His experience includes roles as former Staff Chiropractor at the G.V. Sonny Montgomery VA Medical Center and past chairman of the Chiropractic Summit and Mississippi Department of Health. He is an at-large board member of the Chiropractic Future Strategic Plan and holds an executive board position with the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress.

Reach Dr. Foxworth at 1-888-719-9990, info@chirohealthusa.com, or www.chirohealthusa.com.

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5 Steps to Optimizing Your Practice for Long-Term Success

By **Dr. Lyndsy Johnston**

GCA Member

Aligned – Mentor for Chiropractors

Owner of Heartland Clinic of Chiropractic,
Monticello, GA



Building and sustaining a successful chiropractic practice requires more than clinical expertise. While patient care remains the foundation of the profession, long-term success also depends on operational efficiency, sound financial management, a strong office culture, and professional development through engagement with professional organizations. Today's chiropractic practice must be both clinically effective and strategically managed.

Step 1: Patient Care

Patient care and retention are among the most important factors in practice growth. The quality of care provided influences patient satisfaction, online reviews, referrals, and long-term commitment to chiropractic care. Successful practices focus not only on attracting new patients but also on creating positive experiences that encourage patients to continue care and refer others.

Patient retention is strengthened through education, clear communication, convenient scheduling, appointment reminders, and digital communication options. Practices that cultivate long-term patient relationships often experience greater stability and less pressure to constantly generate new patients. By contrast, a practice that relies solely on a continuous stream of new patients may face increased stress and a higher risk of burnout.

Step 2: Operational Systems

Operational efficiency is another key component of practice optimization. One of the most valuable resources in any clinic is time. Effective time management includes both patient-facing responsibilities and the behind-the-scenes work required to run a successful business.

A strategy that has proven beneficial in many practices is cluster booking, a concept taught by Aligned Mentoring for Chiropractors. Cluster booking involves grouping patient appointments into designated treatment blocks, allowing dedicated periods for patient care and separate blocks for administrative tasks, staff training, marketing, reporting, and practice development. This approach minimizes interruptions, improves focus, and creates a more efficient workflow. Rather than constantly shifting between clinical and administrative duties, chiropractors can remain fully engaged in the task at hand, improving productivity and reducing stress.

Step 3: Financial Management

Financial performance is equally important to long-term success. Maintaining control of overhead expenses helps ensure practice stability during both strong and challenging economic periods. Excessive overhead combined with inconsistent collections can quickly place strain on a business.

Regularly reviewing expenses can identify opportunities to reduce costs and improve profitability. This may include evaluating vendor contracts, comparing service provider fees, purchasing supplies strategically, and eliminating unnecessary expenditures. Chiropractors should also periodically assess their fee structure to ensure it remains competitive and reflective of their training, certifications, and specialized services.

Understanding the cost per patient visit is another critical metric. Knowing how many patient visits are required to cover overhead allows practitioners to make informed business decisions and establish realistic growth goals. For practices that participate with insurance providers, understanding reimbursement rates and their impact on profitability is



equally important. Consistent monitoring of cash flow and key financial indicators help create a sustainable foundation for future growth.

Step 4: Office Culture

Beyond systems and finances, office culture plays a significant role in practice success. Every clinic communicates its values through its environment, staff interactions, patient experience, and overall mission. Whether a practice focuses on personal injury cases, family wellness care, sports performance, or referrals, that identity should be clearly reflected throughout the organization.

A strong office culture begins with a clearly defined vision. Team members should understand the practice's mission and how their daily actions contribute to achieving it. Regularly discussing goals, expectations, and core values helps create alignment and consistency. When staff members embrace the practice vision, patients often experience greater trust, satisfaction, and engagement.

Step 5: Professional Development

Finally, one of the most valuable investments a chiropractor can make is participation in professional organizations. Practice ownership can sometimes feel isolating, but chiropractors do not have to navigate challenges alone. Professional associations and mentoring groups provide education, advocacy, networking, and operational support that can accelerate both personal and professional growth.

The Georgia Chiropractic Association, founded in 1912, has long served as an advocate for the profession through legislative efforts, continuing education, and professional development opportunities. Participation in conferences, seminars, and leadership events helps chiropractors stay informed about industry trends and regulatory changes while building meaningful professional relationships.

Similarly, Aligned Mentoring for Chiropractors, established in 1995, has helped thousands of chiropractors develop referral-based, patient-centered practices through proven systems and mentorship. By strengthening both clinical and business skills, mentoring organizations can provide valuable guidance for practitioners at every stage of their careers.

Optimizing your chiropractic practice is an ongoing process that requires attention to patient care, operational systems, financial performance, office culture, and professional development. Chiropractors who invest in these areas position themselves to build sustainable, purpose-driven practices that serve patients effectively while creating long-term professional fulfillment.

Standing Out in Georgia's Growing Chiropractic Landscape

By **Daniel Carroll**

Chief Marketing Officer of For Chiropractors Only
International Chiropractors Association



Georgia is experiencing remarkable growth. From the energy of metro Atlanta to thriving communities in Macon, Savannah, Augusta, Columbus, Valdosta, and countless small towns across the state, more families are choosing to call Georgia home every year. That growth presents an exciting opportunity for chiropractors—but it also brings increased competition.

Providing exceptional chiropractic care has always been the foundation of a successful practice. However, in today's world, clinical excellence alone is no longer enough. Patients can't choose your office if they never discover it.

Most people begin their healthcare journey online. They search for a chiropractor near home or work, read reviews, visit websites, browse social media, and compare practices before making their first phone call. In many cases, a patient's decision has already been made before they ever walk through your front door. Their first impression is no longer your waiting room—it's your digital presence.

That is why marketing is no longer simply about growing a business. It's about making sure the people who need chiropractic care can find the doctor who is best equipped to help them.

One of the most effective ways to build trust is through social media. Today's patients want to know the doctor behind the practice. They appreciate educational videos, wellness tips, behind-the-scenes moments, community involvement, and even a glimpse into the personality and values of the office. Social media gives chiropractors the opportunity to educate, inspire, and create relationships long before a new patient schedules their first appointment.

Whether your practice serves downtown Atlanta or a rural Georgia community, consistency is far more important than perfection. A practice that regularly shares meaningful content demonstrates that it is active, engaged, and invested in serving its community. Patients naturally gravitate toward offices they feel they already know.

Equally important is being visible when someone is actively searching for help. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) helps

your practice appear in Google's organic search results when potential patients search for chiropractic services in your area. Google Ads, on the other hand, can place your office in front of people looking for immediate care—whether they're searching for relief from headaches, neck pain, sciatica, sports injuries, pregnancy-related discomfort, or family chiropractic care.

SEO and Google Ads are often viewed as competing strategies, but they are actually strongest when they work together. SEO builds long-term authority and visibility, while Google Ads creates immediate opportunities to connect with people actively looking for answers. Together, they help ensure your practice is visible throughout every stage of a patient's search.

Once someone finds your practice online, your website becomes your digital front door.

A modern chiropractic website should do far more than display office hours and a phone number. It should answer common questions, explain your approach to care, introduce your doctors and team, showcase authentic patient testimonials, and make scheduling an appointment simple and convenient. It should also load quickly, function seamlessly on mobile devices, and provide a professional first impression that reflects the quality of care patients can expect once they arrive.

In many cases, your website begins building trust before you ever have the opportunity to speak with a prospective patient.

Communication doesn't stop after someone schedules an appointment.

One of the most valuable investments a practice can make is implementing an effective Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. While the name may sound technical, the purpose is straightforward: helping practices communicate more consistently with patients.

A CRM can organize prospective patients, automate appointment reminders, send educational follow-up messages, request online reviews, reconnect with inactive patients, and ensure that no inquiry goes unanswered. These systems aren't



Sunset at Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park - Photo by Robert Hainer

designed to replace personal relationships—they're designed to strengthen them by creating consistency and improving the overall patient experience.

Every interaction matters.

Whether it's answering the phone with enthusiasm, responding promptly to a text message, replying to an email, or thanking someone for leaving a Google review, every touch-point shapes how patients perceive your practice. Excellent communication builds confidence, encourages referrals, and creates loyal patients who are excited to tell others about their experience.

As Georgia continues to grow, so will the demand for health-care providers who communicate well and make it easy for patients to take the next step. Chiropractors who invest in their visibility today are positioning themselves to better serve their communities tomorrow.

The encouraging news is that chiropractors don't have to become experts in digital marketing, website development, search engine optimization, paid advertising, or marketing automation. Their primary responsibility should remain delivering exceptional chiropractic care while surrounding themselves with the right systems, strategies, and partners that support the business side of practice.

Organizations that specialize in chiropractic marketing can provide support with websites, SEO, Google Ads, social media management, CRM implementation, and patient communication systems, allowing doctors to remain focused on what they do best: serving patients and changing lives through chiropractic.

The future of chiropractic depends not only on excellent doctors, but also on our profession's ability to communicate its message effectively. Every practice has a story worth telling. Every Georgia community has families searching for answers, relief, and better health. When outstanding clinical care is combined with intentional communication and a strong digital presence, more people discover chiropractic, more practices thrive, and more lives are changed.

About the Author

Daniel Carroll is the Chief Marketing Officer of For Chiropractors Only and the International Chiropractors Association, where he works exclusively with chiropractic practices to help them grow through ethical, strategic marketing. His work focuses on websites, search engine optimization, Google Ads, social media, CRM systems, and patient communication designed specifically for the chiropractic profession.

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Every Dollar Matters: Is Your Practice Leaving Money on the Table?

How Georgia Chiropractors Can Improve Profitability
Without Seeing More Patients

By **Mike Zalansky**

President, Fortiq Pay



Running a successful chiropractic practice has never been more demanding. Between managing patient care, staffing, insurance reimbursements, compliance requirements, technology, rising operating costs, and growing patient expectations, today's practice owners wear more hats than ever before. While your focus should remain on delivering exceptional patient outcomes, the reality is that every business decision you make affects the long-term health of your practice.

One of the most overlooked opportunities to improve profitability isn't increasing patient volume or raising prices—it's taking a closer look at the systems and vendors your practice relies on every day. Payment processing is one of those areas.

Most chiropractors spend considerable time evaluating malpractice insurance, payroll providers, accounting firms, and electronic health record systems. Yet very few have ever conducted an independent review of how their practice accepts payments or what it actually costs to do so.

After more than twenty-five years working with businesses throughout the United States, I've learned something that surprises many practice owners: Many businesses aren't necessarily paying too much because credit card processing is expensive—they're paying too much because they simply don't know what they're paying.

Understanding the Difference Between Cost and Value

Payment processing has evolved dramatically over the past decade. What was once simply a credit card terminal sitting on the front counter has become an integrated financial platform connecting practice management software, online scheduling, patient portals, recurring payments, reporting, security, and business analytics.

Unfortunately, many practices still evaluate payment providers the same way they did ten years ago—by comparing a quoted rate.

The quoted rate is only one small piece of the overall picture. The true value of a payment partner comes from the technology, service, transparency, reporting, integration capabilities, security, and ongoing support they provide.

More importantly, it comes from having someone who is working for your practice—not simply selling a merchant account.

Questions Every Practice Owner Should Ask

Whether you've been with the same payment provider for one year or twenty years, it's worth asking yourself a few simple questions.

- Do I know my practice's effective processing rate?
- Have I reviewed my merchant statement within the last twelve months?
- Does my payment solution integrate efficiently with my existing software?
- Are my patients able to pay the way they prefer?
- Is my reporting giving me meaningful business insight?
- If I have a problem, do I know who to call?

For many practices, the honest answer is "I'm not sure." That's perfectly understandable. Payment processing isn't something chiropractors should have to become experts in. That's where having the right partner becomes valuable.

Why an Independent Review Matters

One of the biggest misconceptions in our industry is that changing payment providers automatically means replacing equipment, changing software, or disrupting daily operations.

In many cases, that's simply not true. Modern payment technology offers far more flexibility than many practice owners realize. Sometimes the best recommendation is to leave everything exactly as it is. Other times, small operational improvements can create a better experience for both your staff and your patients. An independent review isn't about convincing someone to switch providers. It's about understanding your current environment and ensuring it continues to support your practice's goals.



Why the Georgia Chiropractic Association Chose Fortiq Pay

The Georgia Chiropractic Association is committed to providing its members with trusted partners who deliver meaningful value—not simply products or services. Fortiq Pay is honored to serve as the Association's preferred payment consulting partner because our philosophy aligns with that commitment. We don't believe every practice should receive the same recommendation. Every chiropractic office has different workflows, different software, different patient demographics, and different business objectives. That's why we begin every relationship by listening. We take the time to understand how your practice operates before recommending technology, payment solutions, or operational improvements. Rather than representing a single processing platform, Fortiq Pay works with multiple leading merchant acquirers and technology providers. This allows us to recommend solutions based on what is best for your practice—not what we're required to sell. That independence allows us to serve as consultants first.

More Than Payment Processing

Today's payment technology should simplify your business—not complicate it. Fortiq Pay helps practices implement solutions that improve efficiency while creating a better patient experience, including:

- Secure in-office payment acceptance
- Contactless and mobile wallet payments
- Online patient payment portals
- Text-to-Pay and Email-to-Pay
- Virtual terminals for phone payments
- Recurring payment solutions
- Practice management software integrations
- Advanced reporting and analytics
- Secure tokenization
- Next-day funding options
- Dedicated U.S.-based customer support

Our goal is simple: Help practices spend less time worrying about payments and more time focusing on patients.

A Complimentary Benefit for GCA Members

As part of our partnership with the Georgia Chiropractic Association, Fortiq Pay offers every GCA member a complimentary **Practice Payment Assessment**.

This is not a sales presentation. It's an opportunity to better understand your current payment environment and receive an objective review from professionals who have spent decades helping businesses optimize payment acceptance.

If your current solution is serving your practice well, we'll tell you. However, we guarantee savings for all GCA members. If we identify opportunities to improve efficiency, simplify operations, enhance reporting, or reduce unnecessary expenses, we'll walk you through those recommendations with complete transparency. Either way, you'll leave with a better understanding of one of the most important financial systems in your practice.

About Fortiq Pay

Fortiq Pay is an independent payment consulting firm specializing in payment optimization, integrated payment technologies, and business payment solutions. With more than 25 years of industry experience, our team helps healthcare providers, businesses, associations, and enterprise organizations improve payment efficiency through transparent consulting, advanced technology, and exceptional service.

We are proud to serve as the **Preferred Payment Consulting Partner of the Georgia Chiropractic Association** and look forward to helping GCA members strengthen their practices for years to come.

The AI Shortcut That Could Cost Your Clinic Everything

By **TJ Blackmon**

Co-owner TaaSPAK,
Chief Information Officer



Artificial intelligence isn't a future problem for healthcare practices; it's already happening quietly, and often without permission. We're seeing in real time that clinic staff are turning to AI tools to save time and streamline their workload often without recognizing the compliance risks involved.

From drafting emails and summarizing patient notes to assisting with billing and administrative tasks, AI tools promise to reduce workload and improve efficiency. In fact, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has identified AI as a critical driver of innovation across healthcare, with the potential to enhance care delivery, streamline operations, and improve decision-making.

For smaller practices in particular, these tools can feel like a lifeline helping teams do more with fewer resources. However, there's a problem developing behind the scenes. Staff are beginning to use AI tools independently: without approval, oversight, or a full understanding of how those tools handle sensitive data. This growing behavior, known as Shadow AI, is quickly becoming one of the most overlooked risks to HIPAA compliance and patient privacy.

What Is Shadow AI?

Shadow AI refers to the use of artificial intelligence tools by employees without organizational approval or governance. Unlike formal AI adoption, which involves vetting vendors and implementing safeguards, Shadow AI happens informally often through simple actions like copying and pasting information into a chatbot.

In healthcare settings, this can include:

- Summarizing patient histories using AI tools
- Asking AI for help with coding or documentation
- Drafting patient communications or insurance appeals

These actions are typically driven by good intentions. Staff are trying to work faster, reduce workload, and improve efficiency. However, what feels like a harmless shortcut can quickly become a serious compliance issue. HHS guidance emphasizes that AI must be implemented with clear governance, oversight, and accountability. Shadow AI bypasses all those safeguards.

Why Shadow AI Conflicts with Federal AI Guidance

The HHS AI Strategy makes it clear that healthcare organizations must adopt AI responsibly. This includes establishing governance frameworks, managing risks, and ensuring that patient data is protected at every stage of AI use. Shadow AI directly conflicts with this approach.

When employees independently use AI tools:

- There is no validation of how the tool handles data.
- There is no oversight of how it is being used.
- There is no accountability if something goes wrong.

This creates a gap between how AI *should* be used and how it is used in many practices today. According to cybersecurity experts, this lack of visibility is one of the biggest risks associated with Shadow AI.

Why Shadow AI Is Different from Other Tech Risks Healthcare has long dealt with "Shadow IT"—the use of unapproved software or applications. But Shadow AI introduces a new level of risk. AI tools don't just store data—they process it, analyze it, and in some cases retain or reuse it.

When patient information is entered into a public AI tool:

- It may be stored on external servers.
- It could be used to train future AI models.
- It may be processed in ways the organization cannot track.

This creates immediate exposure that is difficult, if not impossible, to reverse. Security experts describe this as "data leaving the perimeter instantly," often through routine workflows like copy and paste.

The HIPAA Risk Most Practices Miss

At the core of this issue is HIPAA compliance. Protected Health Information (PHI) must be handled according to strict privacy and security requirements. One of the most critical requirements is the Business Associate Agreement (BAA), which ensures that third-party vendors properly safeguard patient data. Most public AI tools do not offer BAAs. That means the moment patient information is entered into these platforms, it can become a direct HIPAA violation. HHS reinforces that

healthcare organizations are responsible for ensuring that all technologies used with patient data meet federal standards. This responsibility does not shift to the employee or the AI vendor.

The consequences can be:

- Financial penalties
- Regulatory investigations
- Reputational damage
- Loss of patient trust

How Common Is the Problem?

Shadow AI is happening now- in real-time- and it's widespread and growing rapidly. Research shows that healthcare workers are increasingly using AI tools in ways that can expose sensitive data. At the same time, many organizations lack formal governance structures for AI, despite federal recommendations to implement them. This creates a dangerous combination: high adoption with low oversight. HHS has warned that emerging technologies like AI must be adopted carefully to avoid unintended risks to privacy, safety, and system integrity. Without that oversight, organizations are left exposed.

Why Small Practices Are Especially at Risk

Smaller practices face unique challenges when it comes to AI adoption.

Large healthcare systems often have:

- Dedicated IT teams
- Formal approval processes
- Continuous monitoring systems

Smaller clinics typically do not.

This difference leads to:

- Limited visibility into how tools are being used
- Lack of formal policies around AI
- Greater reliance on staff discretion

At the same time, staff still face heavy administrative workloads and time pressures. Without approved solutions, they turn to whatever tools are readily available. This creates a gap between federal expectations and day-to-day reality.

The Real Risks to Your Practice

The risks created by Shadow AI extend beyond compliance: they impact security, operations, and trust. Once patient data is entered into an unapproved system, organizations lose control over that information. HHS emphasizes that maintaining control over sensitive data is a core responsibility of healthcare providers¹². There are also operational concerns. AI-generated content may lack auditability, making it difficult to verify or defend during audits or legal reviews. Cybersecurity risks

increase as well. Unapproved tools can bypass existing protections and introduce vulnerabilities into systems. Liability ultimately falls on the practice, not the employee.

Why Employees Turn to Shadow AI

To effectively address Shadow AI, it's important to understand why it happens. Healthcare professionals face significant administrative burdens. Documentation requirements alone can consume a substantial portion of the workday. HHS acknowledges that reducing administrative workload is one of the key opportunities for AI in healthcare. When organizations fail to provide approved tools, employees will find their own solutions. AI tools are accessible, easy to use, and highly effective. Shadow AI isn't driven by bad intention; it is driven by necessity.

How to Manage AI Safely

The solution is not to ban AI. In fact, HHS makes it clear that AI should be embraced—but used responsibly. For smaller practices, this means implementing practical, manageable controls:

- Educate staff on what information can and cannot be shared.
- Establish clear policies for AI use.
- Require BAAs for any vendor handling PHI.
- Provide compliant alternatives that meet staff needs.
- Monitor usage and identify risks early.

The goal is not restriction; it's control and visibility.

Building a Culture of Responsible AI

Policies alone are not enough; culture plays a critical role. HHS emphasizes that responsible AI adoption requires organizational awareness and accountability. Your practice should encourage transparency. Staff should feel comfortable sharing what tools they are using without fear of punishment. Training should focus on real-world scenarios, helping employees understand both the benefits and risks of AI. When staff are informed and supported, they are far more likely to use AI responsibly.

The Bottom Line

AI is not a problem. In fact, it has the potential to transform healthcare for the better. The real issue is unmanaged use. Shadow AI is already happening, and for small practices, it can go unnoticed until it becomes a serious compliance issue. The good news is that it's manageable. By aligning with federal guidance, implementing basic governance, and providing safe tools, your practice can take advantage of AI while protecting patient privacy and maintaining compliance. Because in healthcare, innovation should never come at the expense of trust.

The AI Shortcut That Could Cost Your Clinic Everything

About the Author

TJ Blackmon is a co-owner of **TaaSPAK, LLC** and serves as Chief Information Officer with more than 30 years of experience supporting small and mid-sized businesses. A hands-on technology leader and trusted advisor, TJ specializes in helping organizations strengthen their IT infrastructure, improve cybersecurity, and operate more efficiently.

As an endorsed partner of the Georgia Chiropractic Association, TJ works closely with chiropractic practices to address the unique technology and security challenges facing modern healthcare environments. His practical, real-world approach focuses on delivering tailored IT solutions that help practices stay secure, compliant, and productive.

TJ is known for his ability to translate complex technology topics into clear, actionable guidance. Through his work with businesses and professional associations, he has built a reputation for reliability, personal service, and long-term partnerships that help organizations grow with confidence.



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