

Patrons of Chiropractic Science Inc.

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OPEN LETTER TO:

The Hon. Jenny Mikakos MLC

Victorian Minister for Health

By email: jenny.mikakos@parliament.vic.gov.au, and media outlets

Dear Minister,

Re: Latrobe Regional Hospital – Call for broad based SCV review into perinatal care

Patrons of Chiropractic Science (PCS) draws your attention to the death of an infant in March 2019 at the Latrobe Regional Hospital and recent finding confirming the death was caused by trauma sustained during the birthing process, apparently from unskilled use of forceps equipment. What is most disturbing about this event was the systemic cover-up by the hospital, health authorities and political medicine. This situation is even more disturbing because only the grieving parents persistent demands for a formal investigation uncovered the extent and cause of the injuries, and concealment of numerous facts.

This unfortunate incident must also be considered in the light of the rather disastrous events related to medical care of infants announced in 2016, where up to 38 neonate babies had died at the Bacchus Marsh Hospital. Eleven of these deaths have now been directly attributed to "sub-optimal" care, clinical and medical errors, or negligence.

Public awareness of the events in 2016 highlighting multiple infant perinatal deaths at Bacchus Marsh, coincided with the sudden, very public attack on the Chiropractic profession by the Medical profession and your department, that revolved around a single case of infant care for colic that happened to be made public by the treating chiropractor via a YouTube release. A second unrelated chiropractic infant case aired on YouTube in 2019, which triggered your demand for a Safety Care Victoria (SCV) Review into safety of chiropractic care for children under 12 years. It certainly had nothing to do with harm, specific legal matters or malpractice claims. In both of these instances, the infant's respective parents, were pleased with the treatment outcomes and improvements in their infant's health. On the other hand, the medical treatments and interventions leading to the events at the Bacchus Marsh and Latrobe Hospitals resulted in serious injuries and multiple infant deaths. Further, there are many other instances of similar injuries to neonates and infants at the hands of the medical profession. Over 3000 perinatal infants die each year in Australia, and many of these may have resulted from the same failings identified at the Bacchus Marsh and Latrobe hospitals. The key difference is, few of these infant's distressed parents, ever insisted on full investigation and disclosure.

Yet you elected to publicly state in relation to the treatments of children by chiropractors as "the dangerous practice of child spinal manipulation" and that "it's appalling that young children and infants are being exposed to potential harm". You then called on all parents "to have a say and share their stories about such harm". Unfortunately for you and the medical profession, there were no such stories presented to the SCV Review, only fabrications or unrelated stories through media sites. During this period, you and your office allowed and encouraged media outlets to post

multiple, unsubstantiated negative “stories” about Chiropractic care. However, you have clearly not encouraged similar comments in relation to the recent gross failings of medical care with neonates.

The only evidence of harm related to manipulation generated by the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and its ancillary groups were three cases, where none related to Australian chiropractic care. One was a case of a death of a child in the USA at the hands of a dentist and another at the hands of a physiotherapist. We would agree with the AMA, that neither of these professions is correctly trained in the safe delivery of spinal adjustments to children.

Minister, your statements, made prior to the conduct of the SCV inquiry into chiropractic care for children, were clearly pre-emptive, ill-informed and unsubstantiated. They had the probable effect of prejudicing both the inquiry and public perception with respect to its outcomes.

Further, it appears entirely possible that part of the strategy of the AMA and its public relations arm, the Friends of Science in Medicine, in relation to their vexatious accusations about chiropractic care, may have been to distract the public from the primary source of actual harm and mortality associated with infant health care; medicine. You may have noted that Australian chiropractors do not actually cause the death of any infants under their care.

Given your office’s concern about public safety, and how quickly you insisted on a formal and extensive SCV Review into safety of children under 12 years associated with chiropractic care, clearly based on no actual evidence of harm, it is obvious that you must now initiate an extensive, formal, broad based review on medical training, efficacy and care of infants, and not just an isolated review of a single case. Any other decision smacks of gross hypocrisy.

There have been many wild statements made about the lack of empirical evidence for many aspects of chiropractic care, but the fact remains that there is also very little credible evidence based medicine ("EBM") or randomized (double blind) controlled trial ("RCT") data for most aspects of the practical applications of medical procedures and care, including the surgical and obstetrical branches. While PCS acknowledges there is plenty of anecdotal evidence of benefit for these aspects of conventional medical care, this form of evidence also applies to chiropractic care. Both professions actually have their patient’s interests at heart. Yet you insisted on a detailed review of chiropractic care, and later required presentation of what you seem to regard as credible scientific evidence to justify its benefits.

Given all of these indisputable facts, and the persistent infants deaths at the hands of some medical attendants, PCS demands that you immediately initiate a full and extensive SCV Review of medical care for children under 12 years, and particularly neonate care, obstetrical procedures and training. This review must also allow submissions from all health care professionals.

Further Minister, the chiropractic profession believes that it is only fair that you publicly apologise for your pre-emptive and unqualified remarks, effectively defaming the exemplary safety record of our profession with respect to the treatment of children, and for that matter, people of all age groups. We look forward to a demonstration of your actual concern for all aspects of health care, and in particular infant care. We, and the public, wonder if you have sufficient ethical standards to behave in such a balanced and commensurate manner.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Free B.App.Sc. FGCS
PCS President



Christopher Hart D.C. FGCS
PCS Secretary