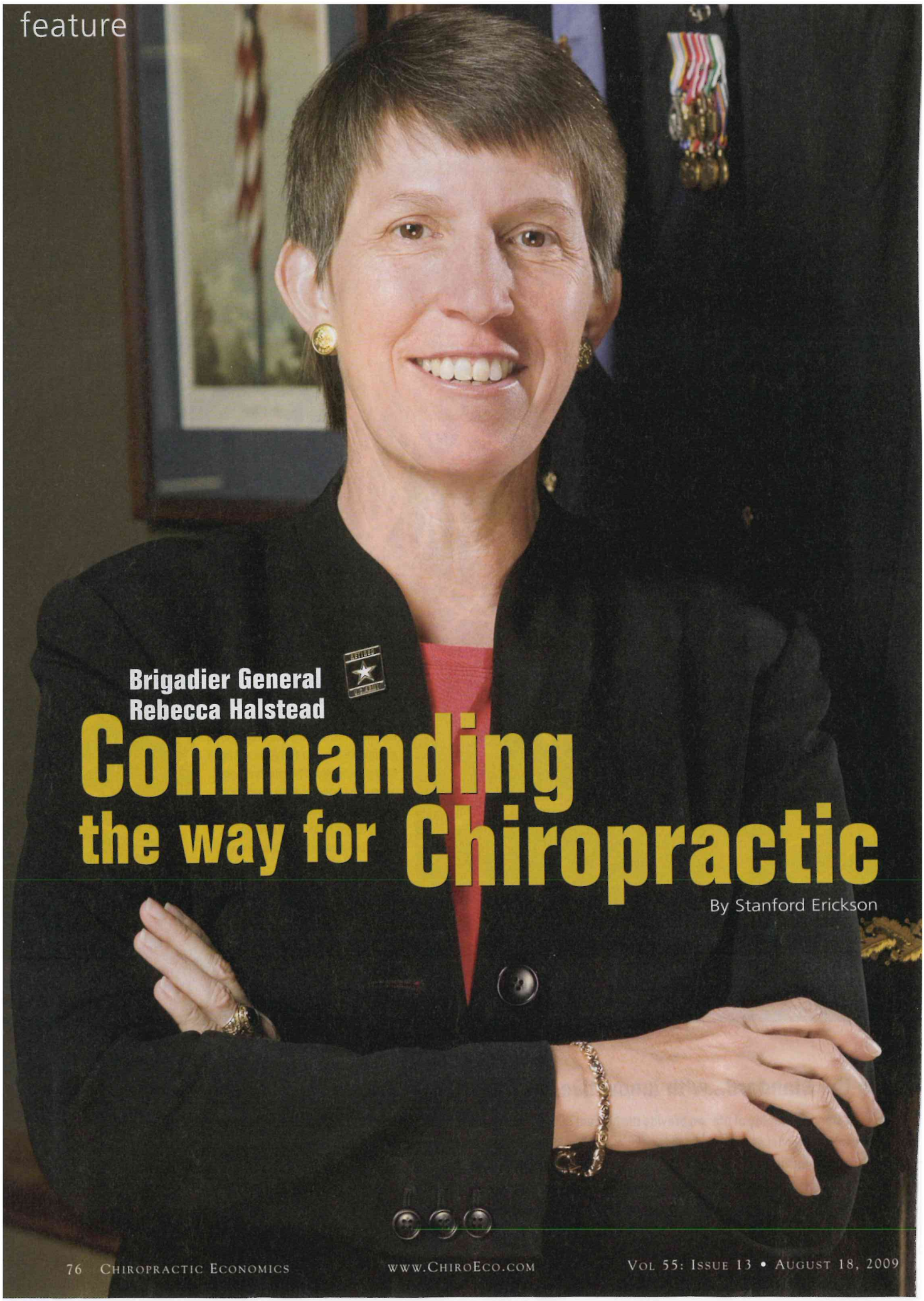
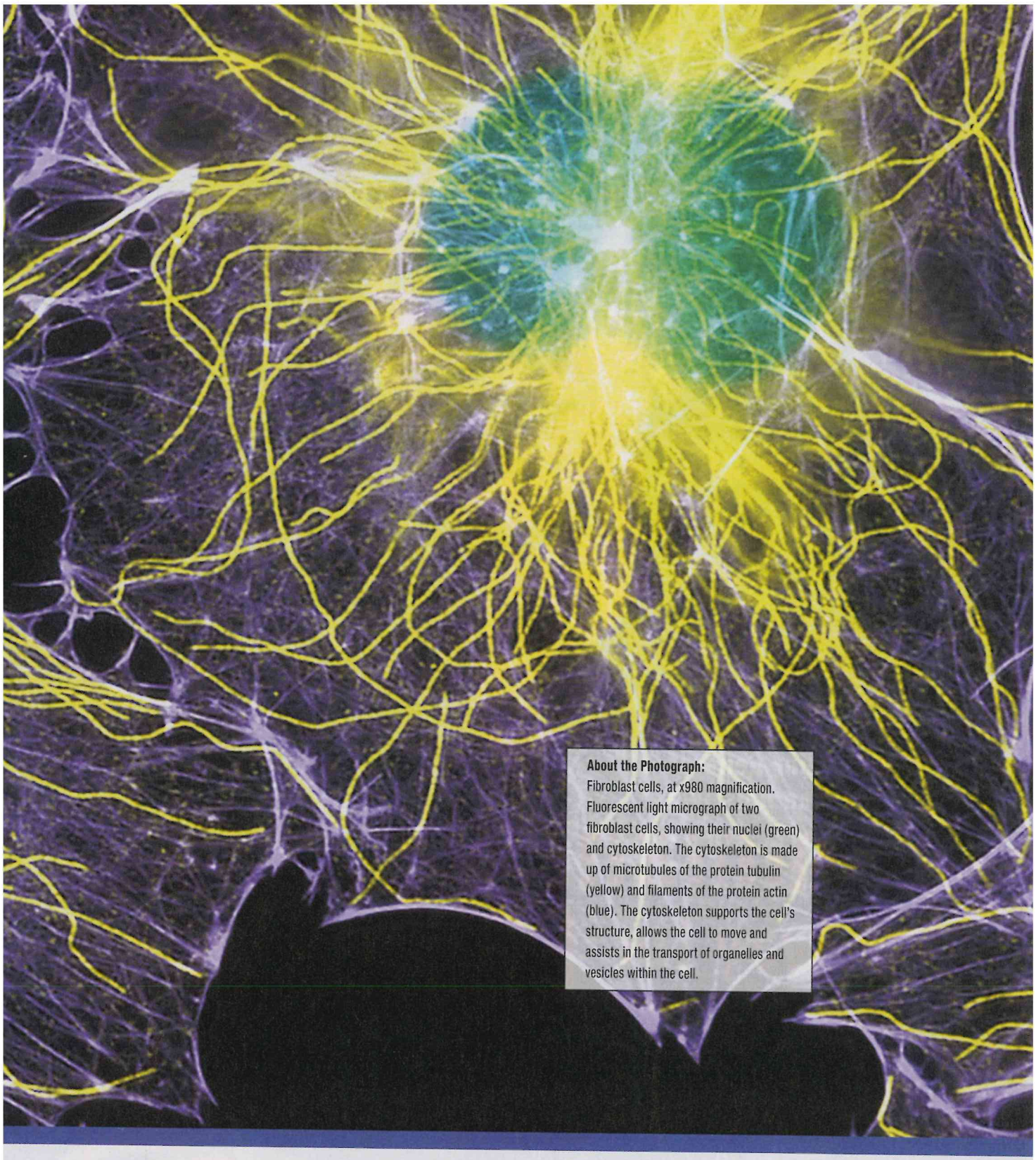


Brigadier General Rebecca Halstead

Commanding the way for Chiropractic

By Stanford Erickson



About the Photograph:
Fibroblast cells, at x980 magnification. Fluorescent light micrograph of two fibroblast cells, showing their nuclei (green) and cytoskeleton. The cytoskeleton is made up of microtubules of the protein tubulin (yellow) and filaments of the protein actin (blue). The cytoskeleton supports the cell's structure, allows the cell to move and assists in the transport of organelles and vesicles within the cell.

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When Brigadier General Rebecca "Becky" Halstead (Retired U.S. Army General Officer) entered a room, she was used to listening, making decisions, and taking charge.

It would be great if she could listen, make a decision, take charge, and just give the order for chiropractic care to be extended here and abroad for all military personnel and their families — but we know it isn't quite that easy.

As a spokesperson for the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress (www.yes2chiropractic.org), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to increasing public awareness of the benefits of chiropractic, Halstead knows "this is an effort that will take all of us working together and I am willing to help lead the effort."

As she appears before audiences, she communicates her passion about her highly positive experience with chiropractic care over a protracted period of time and her wholehearted support for extending chiropractic care at all military facilities — to include all Veterans Administration hospitals in the United States and abroad.

Not only is she making a difference, she is also motivating and inspiring chiropractors and consumers alike to make a difference. "My passion and motivation in life has been to make a difference for others," she says.

"In a war zone, the average soldier and marine on the ground is carrying between 70 to 125 pounds of arms and equipment," Halstead says. "In addition to foot patrols in austere conditions, they also are often sitting or lying in cramped quarters in a military vehicle or in a security position on a base perimeter.

"When they do sleep, it is generally not restful sleep or for many hours. This physical stress places a lot of strain on the musculoskeletal structure of a combat warrior's body, not to mention the emotional stress of living day-in and day-out with the possibility of intense and deadly battle.

"Treating this kind of physical and emotional stress is the sweet spot of chiropractic care. However, chiropractic care is not available at most military treatment facilities, and it is not available in the combat zone where it is needed most. Our military has some of the best and brightest medical doctors well schooled and educated in dispensing drugs to help mask the pain, both physical and emotional.

"In my opinion, however, we need the talent of chiropractors well schooled and educated in dealing with musculoskeletal ailments and physical related stress to prevent, reduce, or even eliminate these types of ailments, rather than mask the problems."

Halstead emphasizes she is not in any way wanting fewer physicians at military facilities here and abroad. She is promoting, however, the need for chiropractic care to complement the care provided by medical doctors.

"A holistic approach to wellness is not a new concept to the military. We have trained on the principles of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual fitness for a very long time. Like many things in life, though, we often fall short on practicing this sense of balance.

"We need our medical doctors, but we need chiropractic care, too. Our military men and women, and their families, have earned and richly deserve chiropractic care be available to them to support our principles of fitness, wellness, and readiness."

Kent S. Greenawalt, president of the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress and CEO and president of Foot Levelers Inc., agrees. "General Halstead's career is an example of outstanding, excellent service to our nation. Those in the military, who serve all of us, protecting our security and our liberty, also deserve availability of outstanding, excellent chiropractic care. Anything less is being less than grateful for their sacrifices."

A comprehensive chiropractic wellness program approaches preventative and restorative healing of the body with the same focus and comprehension that the military uses to fine-tune its wartime warriors.

Halstead's service

"I grew up in upstate New York, about four hours from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. I had not been exposed to the Academy or the army while growing up. In 1976, my mom read in the newspaper about the Academies opening their doors to women, and she thought the description of the women they were seeking

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— good high school grades, athletic ability, and a moral approach to life — sounded just like me. I refer to my mom as the Renaissance woman because not many moms were pushing their daughters in the direction of the military in those days," says Halstead.

Receiving a Congressional appointment, she entered the Academy in 1977 — the second year women were admitted. She excelled despite the fact only half of the women to join her class graduated. When she was selected as "Plebe of the Regiment" her first year, a story in *Stars & Stripes* noted she looked at her certificate and it read, "he, him, and his...."

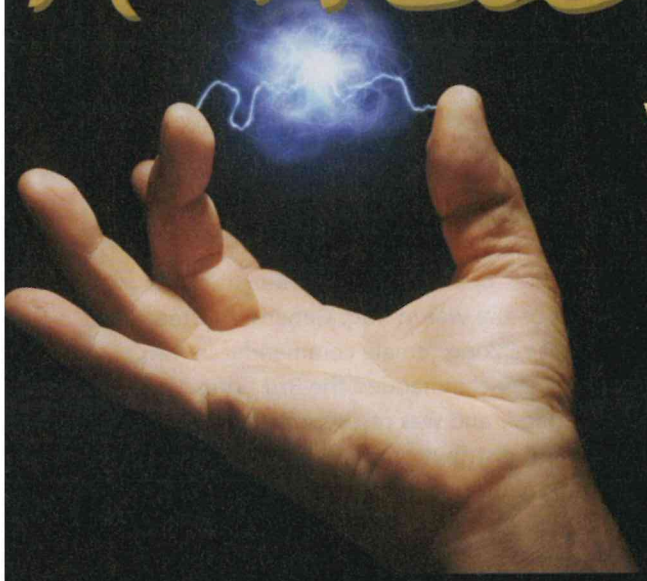
Halstead graduated from West Point in 1981 as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering. She later earned a Master of Science in National Resource Strategy (Advanced Manufacturing) from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, and a Master of Science in Advanced Military Studies (Visionary Leadership) from the Army Command and General Staff College.

In 2004, numerous residents from her hometown traveled to Germany to attend the ceremony of her receiving the Brigadier General star — making history as the first female West Point graduate to be promoted to General Officer.

Although she never planned on a career to lead her to the upper ranks, she succeeded in doing so — but success came at great cost and personal sacrifice, especially with her health.

For a number of years, Halstead has suffered from fibromyalgia syndrome — a disorder classified by chronic widespread pain and a heightened and painful response to physical pressure and exertion.

A New Horizon



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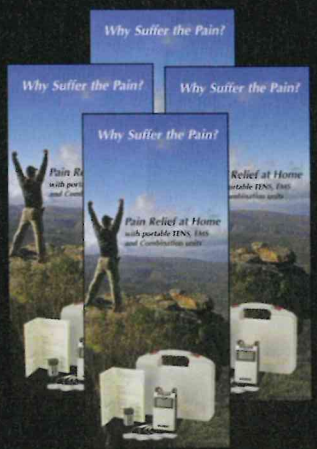

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Service in war zones

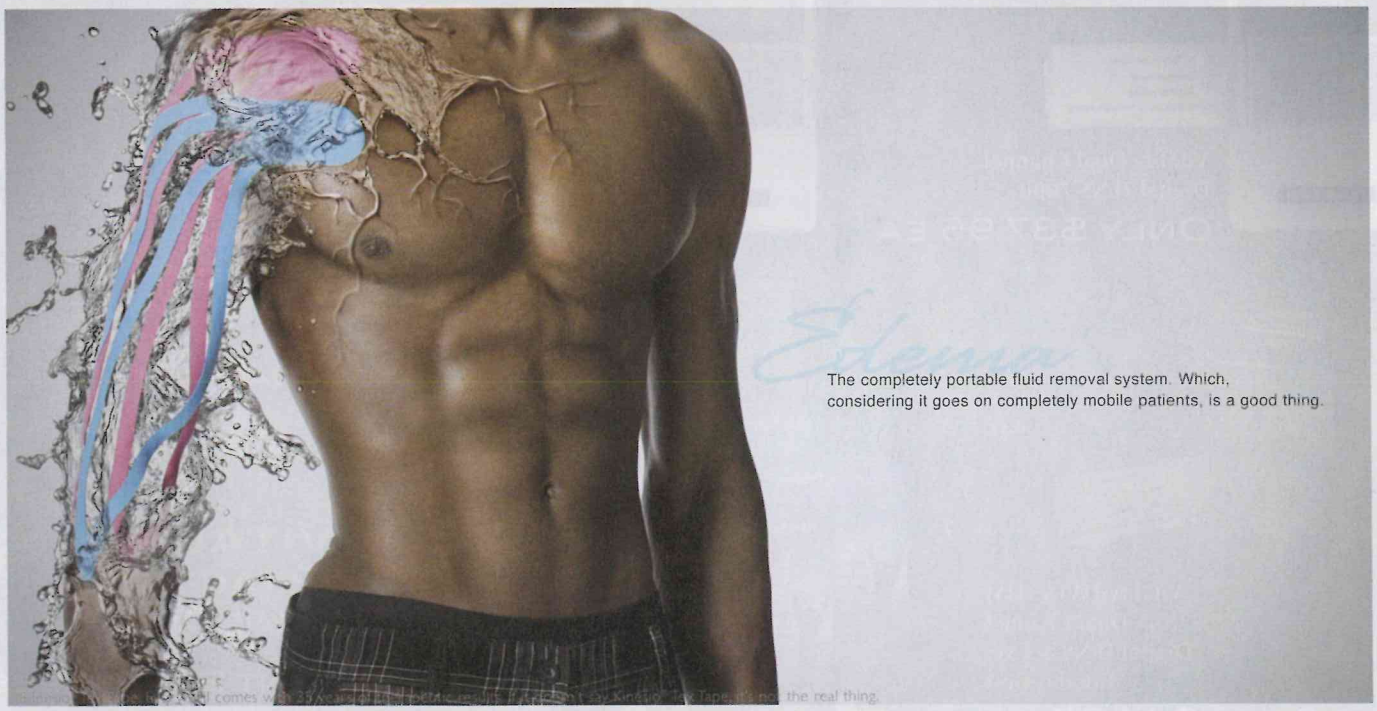
Halstead served 27 years in the U.S. Army, retiring in 2008. She served in Europe as the Deputy Commanding General (Chief Operating Officer) for the 21st Theater Support Command. She was Chief Advisor to the Combatant Commander (Four Star General) responsible for military training in Latin America, coordinating directly with high-level organizations including the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Department of State, U.S. Congress, U.S. Ambassadors, and equivalent foreign military and civilian organizations.

Prior to Halstead's combat duty in Iraq, she served in Uzbekistan and Afghanistan for a short period of time in 2001 and 2002. She was a Colonel and commanded the 10th Mountain Division Support Command during that time. Just after Sept. 11, she deployed to Uzbekistan to facilitate the movement of the 10th Mountain Division to Afghanistan. She later joined the 10th Mountain Division in March of 2002 in Afghanistan to help develop the logistics plans for future operations.

From 2005-2006, one of the most traumatic and deadly periods of the war in Iraq, General Halstead was the highest ranking female commander in Iraq.

At that time, she commanded the 3rd Corps Support Command, and was responsible for coordination and distribution of all logistics (supplies, fuel, ammunition, ground vehicle maintenance, water, food, etc.) for the Army units in Iraq (supporting more than 250,000 men and women).

Her command had more than 200 units, and she was responsible for leading more than 20,000 soldiers and 5,000 civilians. She also was responsible for the base defense of five military bases, including Balad, Iraq — which was home to more than 30,000 military members and civilians supporting the war effort.



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"Part of my health challenges were my own fault because I put a lot of pressure on myself to excel, and I convinced myself that slowing down was a sign of weakness," explains Halstead.

"At the same time, the military's high pace of operations and pressure, especially during a time of war, also placed a tremendous amount of pressure on me. All of our men and women are feeling this pressure. We are trained to be warriors so we convince ourselves that any sign of weakness, physical or mental, makes us less of a warrior.

"We have to reverse this mentality and encourage our men and women to have the courage to share their stories, deal with their health challenges, and give them the tools for becoming stronger without feeling shame or weak.

"The most important resource in our military is the human resource! We must practice preventative measures with our people just like we do with our equipment. We must maintain and sustain our people, and when worn out or broken, fix them, and this can only be done by providing all measures of care to them."

"Being a runner — and I started running cross country in high school — and given the physical rigors of military life, I often availed myself of chiropractic treatments," said Halstead. "But, it was after a few years of suffering from fibromyalgia that I really awakened to the full measure of chiropractic care."

Looking forward

Halstead had resigned herself to living the rest of her life in pain and discomfort.

"The medical physicians' treatment for fibromyalgia was to put me on medicines that masked the pain. When I read the label of the prescription, it included antidepressants. Anyone who knows me knows I am not a depressed person. I told the doctor I was not depressed and asked him why he placed me on an antidepressant. His response was, 'You will be (depressed).' And he was somewhat right, because as I took more and more pain medicine, I became very discouraged."

Then, Halstead was introduced to Carol Ann Malizia, DC, of Oakland, N.J. Malizia is a current board member of the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress.

"Dr. Malizia changed my whole outlook on dealing with my chronic ailment. She prescribed a

ACA helps in legislation

Musculoskeletal problems are the number one diagnosis for all U.S. troops treated at a Veteran's Administration Hospital since 2002 who have been deployed in Afghanistan and Iraqi, according to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

Some 49.2 percent of those troops, on a cumulative basis, have been diagnosed with musculoskeletal problems, according to a report issued in January by the VHA Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards.

Given that fact, it is sort of incongruous that the Department of Defense and Congress have been dragging their collective feet in deploying doctors of chiropractic at VA hospital facilities and military bases here and abroad.

But that might all change soon.

As part of next fiscal year's National Defense Authorization Act (HR 2647), the U.S. House of Representatives has approved a directive that orders the Pentagon to make chiropractic care a standard benefit for all active duty military personnel. Passed by the full House on June 25, the bill contains language allowing for chiropractic demonstration projects at overseas military locations and specifies that chiropractic care at U.S. military facilities be performed only by a doctor of chiropractic.

The Senate has not included similar language in its version of the National Defense Authorization Act. But, according to American Chiropractic Association (ACA) Vice President of Government Relations John Falardeau, U.S. Senator Ben Nelson (D-NE), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Personnel Armed Services, has been approached to try and interject similar language when the Senate and House reconcile their bills in a conference committee.

Secretary of the Army nominee and current U.S. Representative John McHugh (center, R-NY) discusses chiropractic care in the military with ACA consultant Rick Miller (left) and ACA Government Relations Vice President John Falardeau (right). McHugh, former ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee and a staunch supporter of ACA, was a chief advocate of chiropractic care in the military during his time in the House and will be counted on to continue that support should his nomination be confirmed by the Senate.

Of the 264 U.S. military facilities worldwide, to date there is a doctor of chiropractic at 49 of those bases. Beginning this fall, 11 additional military hospitals and clinics will provide access to chiropractic services for active duty military members, including facilities in Germany and Okinawa.

comprehensive chiropractic/wellness regimen that today permits me to have many days without pain and most days without taking any medicines."

Malizia's treatment for Halstead included hands-on musculoskeletal adjustments, as well as introducing her to natural nutritional supplements, a prescribed nutritional diet, acupuncture and massage therapy, and continuing her exercise program.

"I like to draw parallels," said Halstead. "The military is very focused on training and wellness, and has comprehensive programs for physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual fitness.

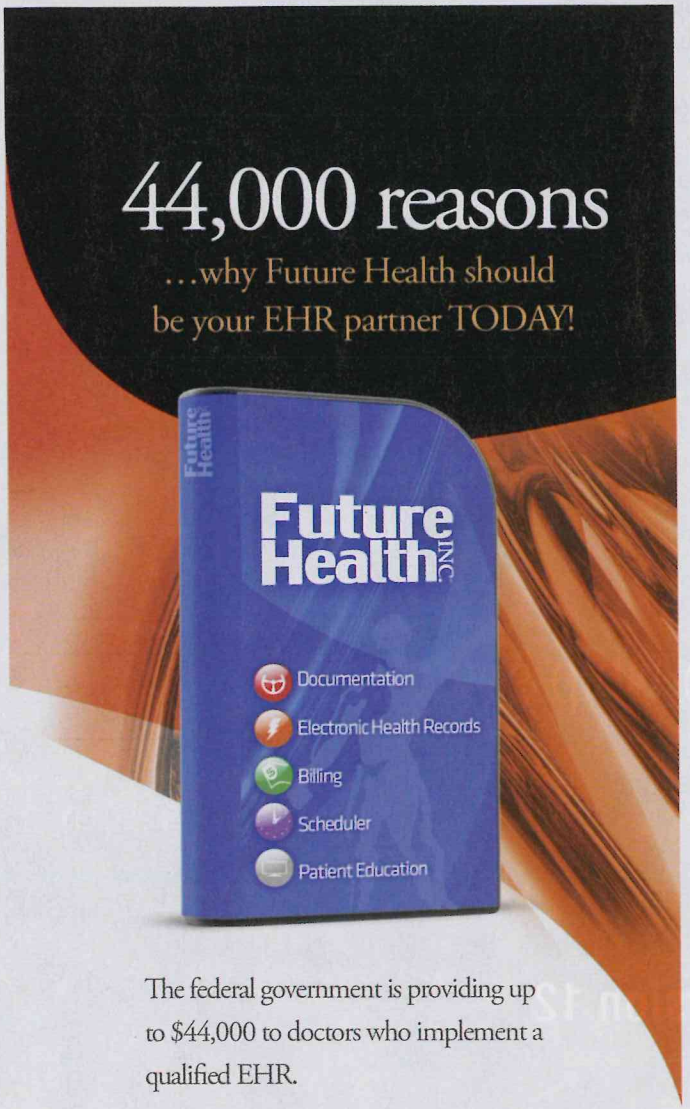
"The parallel I want to draw here is that doctors of chiropractic who practice, teach, and encourage the holistic approach to wellness (musculoskeletal adjustments, nutrition, exercise, natural supplements, etc.) are the ones I believe do the most for their patients. A comprehensive chiropractic wellness program approaches preventative and restorative healing of the body with the same focus and comprehension that the military uses to fine-tune its wartime warriors.

"But in the military, like many organizations, we do not always practice what we preach," according to Halstead.

"In a war-time situation like Iraq and Afghanistan, we not only fail to provide our warriors with proper care for their musculoskeletal structure, but we fail miserably in enforcing proper nutritional diets.

"Yes, our dining facilities have the proper food and in abundance. But, with a desire to boost people's morale, we have made available for them a plethora of fast foods and desserts. I call it comfort food because our men and women feel like they are getting a taste of home, but with the inability to exercise the way we do in garrison, the result overall is unhealthy.

"I seemed to survive on toasted cheese sandwiches and mashed potatoes, even though I had other



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choices, because they were convenient and did not upset my system. Not exactly the diet my chiropractor Dr. Carol Ann Malizia has now recommended to me," says Halstead.

Today, she is executive director for leader development for The Praevius Group (www.praeviusgroup.com), a consultancy focused on "the innovative fusion of leadership development and technology." Asked what that actually means, Halstead says "Leaders have to learn to think differently and leverage technology to find the best solutions."

She goes on to say how "the U.S. Army is excellent in training us how to become competent leaders of character. When I give workshops on leadership, I always begin by saying that to be a leader you must first be able lead yourself and serve others — which requires determination, discipline, humility, and selflessness. Being in a leadership position does not make you a leader. You have to earn the respect and title of leader."

The Foundation for Chiropractic Progress is banking on this same leadership ability of Halstead to foster greater understanding and awareness of the documented benefits chiropractic care can bring to patients — both in military service and in society in general.

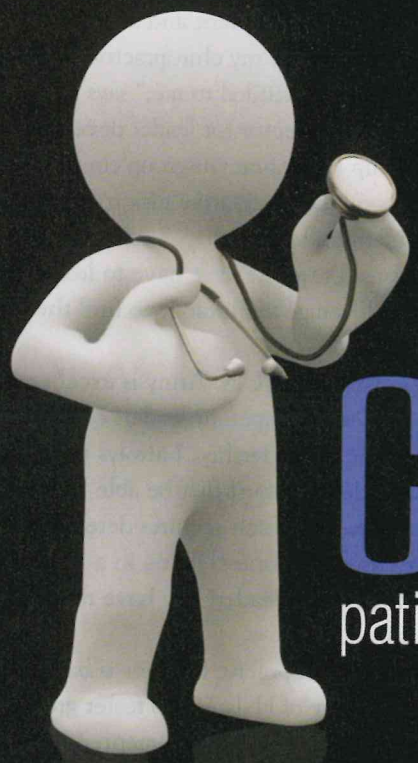
"When the Foundation asked me to be a spokesperson, I welcomed the opportunity," said Halstead. "I saw it as a personal obligation to share with others how chiropractic care has helped me, and made a difference in my life. I equate it to sharing my testimony of faith, because if I believe in it, and it works for me, I desire to share it with others so it can work for them.

"I also welcomed the opportunity to further serve my country by pushing the envelope and being a voice to open chiropractic care to all military men and women, and their families.

"I applaud all who support the efforts of the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress because the Foundation has the momentum to influence change and make chiropractic care available. I also applaud the innovative doctors of chiropractic who have offered their services at discount to our military men and women as a way of saying 'thank you for your service to our nation.'" CE

Stanford Erickson is the editorial director for *Chiropractic Economics*. He can be reached at 904-567-1555 or serickson@chiroeco.com.

Those who wish to make a tax-deductible contribution to The Foundation for Chiropractic Progress will receive an 18-inch by 24-inch poster of General Rebecca Halstead. You can go to www.f4cp.com to make a contribution pledge.



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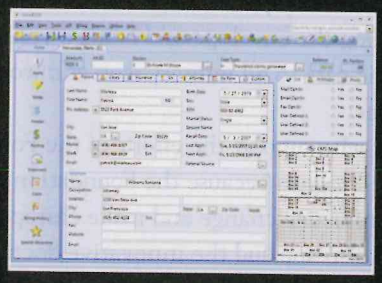

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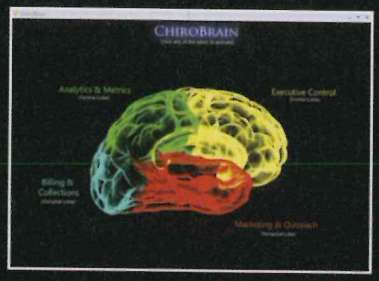

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