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Canada's First Chiropractic Research Chair

By Allan Gotlib, BSc,DC

After a stringent peer review, Canada's first chiropractic research chair was awarded to Greg Kawchuk,DC,PhD, at the University of Calgary (UC). As the first research position in Canada specifically devoted to chiropractic research supported directly by the federal government, it was presented according to guidelines established by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Canadian Chiropractic Association (CCA), the Canadian Chiropractic Research Foundation (CCRF), and the Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research (FCER).

The chair is a five-year funding commitment with both a salary award and an operating grant, and requires an active faculty appointment. Dr. Kawchuk will hold the position of assistant professor in the faculty of kinesiology at UC. This, and the CCA's long-term commitment to facilitating chiropractic research has grown out of the of the association's mission statement, "helping Canadians live healthier lives" as paramount. This is completely congruent with Health Canada. (*Editor's note:* Health an active faculty appointment. Dr. Kawchuk will hold the position of assistant professor in the faculty of kinesiology at UC. This position, and the CCA's long-term commitment to facilitating chiropractic research, have grown out of the association's mission statement, "helping Canadians live healthier lives" as paramount. This is completely congruent with Health Canada. (*Editor's note:* Health Canada "provides national leadership to develop health policy, enforce health regulations, promote disease prevention and enhance healthy living for all Canadians.")

As chair of chiropractic research, Dr. Kawchuk's investigations will be directed at increasing the profession's knowledge in three areas of particular importance to field practitioners: the measurement of treatment dosage, treatment outcomes, and treatment complications. Preliminary work in these areas has resulted in the recent awarding of equipment and operating grants to Dr. Kawchuk from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Special Chiropractic Research Fund. In addition to his research, Dr. Kawchuk will act as the faculty of kinesiology's course coordinator

and lecturer for undergraduate human anatomy, and will supervise master's and doctoral-level graduate students who intend to become career chiropractic researchers.

Dr. Kawchuk graduated from the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College (CMCC) in 1990. He completed his master's thesis in biomechanics at UC, and his PhD in bioengineering at the McCaig Centre for Joint Injuries and Arthritis Research. His doctoral work focused on delineating how different tissues interact to define spinal stiffness. Recently he was awarded the Surgical Dynamics Travel Fellowship from the International Society for the Study of the Lumbar Spine, to participate in a collaborative study at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and Yale, with Drs. Khalsa, Cholewicki and Panjabi. Dr. Kawchuk is presently the assistant editor of the *Journal of the Canadian Chiropractic Association (JCCA)*, and is on the editorial board of the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiologic Therapeutics (JMPT)*. He is also the senior chiropractor and director of chiropractic residencies at University Health Services - a multidisciplinary clinic located on UC's main campus.

The CCA/CCRF/CIHR joint partnership initiative is an innovative program that has been responsible for the creation of this new research position. Specifically, the initiative is aimed at:

1. strengthening the links between the newly created CIHR, chiropractic health researchers, the CCA, and the newly restructured CCRF;
2. facilitating long-term support for Canadian chiropractic researchers, dedicated to sustainable and enduring chiropractic research in Canada;
3. building its academic intellectual chiropractic capacity to raise the profile of the profession, in terms of being a key player in the health care system; and
4. focusing its strategies and establishing a targeted chiropractic research agenda.

The CIHR and the government recognize the large numbers of Canadians who access alternative and complementary approaches to health care, particularly chiropractic. By working together, we will help shape

the Canadian research agenda and translate research findings into practice within Canada's health system. The joint partnership program is a commitment that ensures investigators are provided with the resources and training needed to address the health challenges faced by Canadians and chiropractic patients. As a result, Canadians may enjoy the health benefits created by chiropractic research.

In 1999, three PhD candidates were supported with \$221,260 over a two-year period. Dr. Jill Hayden is training in the clinical epidemiology program at the University of Toronto, and is conducting research based at the Institute for Work and Health on low back pain outcome measurement and prediction of outcome. Annalyn Mercado is training in clinical psychology, and will undertake her research in the recovery of adult motor vehicle collision patients, through the Institute for Health and Outcomes Research at the University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Kawchuk was recognized in this program, and has since completed his postdoctoral research at the McCaig Center.

The "Chiropractic Research Chair" was then established for a five-year period, to provide a before-tax salary of \$250,000, total benefits of approximately \$41,250, and an operating budget of \$50,000.

In the third and most recent cycle of awards, a new agreement will support a three-year postdoctoral fellowship with \$145,500 dollars. Dr. Jeff Quon, DC, a PhD candidate in the department of health care and epidemiology at the University of British Columbia, will undertake a randomized controlled trial to compare the effectiveness of surgical versus nonsurgical management of patients with lumbar disc herniation. This project has met the peer review standards utilized at the CIHR, and is funded with federal dollars.

As you can see, the CCA has taken an aggressive leadership role in furthering the profession's research capacity. Acquiring valid and reliable scientific evidence concerning the efficacy and safety of chiropractic care, in addition to training chiropractors to perform high-quality research, is extremely important to the profession and to our patients.

The CIHR is Canada's leading federal health funding agency with a budget in excess of \$500 million. The joint partnership program to date has provided in excess of \$700,000 in support of chiropractic research and chiropractic researchers. The CCA and the CCRF are very proud to have facilitated this significant event and look forward to continued positive relations with the CIHR in promoting chiropractic research in Canada.

Allan Gotlib,DC,

Canadian Chiropractic Association (CCA), research programs coordinator

Toronto, Ontario

Canada

algotlib@ccachiro.org

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