



Dynamic Chiropractic – March 25, 1994, Vol. 12, Issue 07

Chiropractic Goes to the Odessa-Pirogov Medical Institute in Ukraine

By Thomas Bache-Wiig

Imagine being warmly welcomed into a lecture hall filled with dozens of senior medical students and five of the nation's top MDs, neurologists, orthopedic specialists, physical therapists and more. As you stand on the rostrum, behind the lectern at a world renowned sports medicine complex, each of your health care counterparts are straining to hear your words, and are feverishly scribbling notes, as you, a DC, share the philosophy and techniques of your profession. What an experience that would be!

That was the experience of Bruce Hagen Sr., DC, of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, as he spoke at the world renowned sports medicine center, the Odessa-Pirogov Medical Institute in Ukraine this past September.

Dr. Hagen Sr., his wife, and four other chiropractors, among others, visited Ukraine for two weeks. The trip was sponsored by the Christian Chiropractors Association, and Together International, a group that matches professionals with their counterparts in other countries.

After delivering \$20,000 in medical and dental supplies, the DCs and their team traveled via ship up the Dneiper River, stopping at ten port cities, providing the equivalent of more than \$80,000 in professional services to anyone who came for help.

Some of the conditions Dr. Hagen Sr., and his colleagues practiced under in the beautiful Ukrainian countryside were quite primitive. Poor sanitation, poverty and lack of hope, however, didn't dampen the spirits of the people who came to see the doctors in the churches, homes, hospitals, orphanages, and jails which dot the gentle, rolling hills and valleys of Ukraine.

Imagine the response of the people who received relief from pain and injuries they'd suffered, in some cases, decades before. One man, who appeared to be about 90 years-old, shuffled in, assisted by the team's young interpreter. The old man's back was bent over so far forward that he faced the floor as he walked.

When he took his coat off, Dr. Hagen saw it was clear the man's spine was severely curved backward in the lumber region. Upon closer examination on the portable adjusting table, Dr. Hagen surmised that the man had probably fractured his lower back many years earlier. The man's spine protruded so much that his spine had a serrated look. After Dr. Hagen finished the adjustment, the old man was able to stand nearly erect.

In another case, a woman who's shoulder for years had been frozen in place from an injury, wept as she freely lifted her arm, which she immediately employed to reach over and clutch Dr. Hagen in a heartfelt embrace of thanks. That brought nearly everyone in the room to tears.

Dr. Hagen says the highlight of the trip, from a professional perspective, was the exceptionally warm reception he got from his medical counterparts at the Odessa-Pirogov Medical Institute. "Whatever helps my patients" was the credo of these top-flight physicians. With open arms and open minds, one by one, they greeted the DCs with personal and professional warmth and respect, and the curiosity of the true scientist. They listened with fascination to this "radical" concept of restoring health without surgery and dangerous drugs.

"Could it be medical science has more to learn about the human body?", many probably thought. "Is it possible chiropractic is an untapped vein of health care gold medicine hasn't mined yet?" As the physicians and medical students looked on, Dr. Hagen adjusted MD after MD until the medical students, who'd waited in deference to their superiors, clamored onto the portable adjusting table one by one. But the once-in-a-lifetime experience was far from over when everyone who wanted to be treated had been.

In the city of Cherkassi, Dr. Hagen was escorted to the hospital's trauma ward where he was invited to treat the medical staff. In treating a chronic high blood pressure patient, Dr. Hagen showed the stymied MDs that a patient's blood pressure can be directly and positively effected by chiropractic care. The patient's blood pressure dropped 15 points before the eyes of the MDs who took the readings. In a nation of people who have been taught to see before they believe, nothing is more empirical than a "before-and-after adjustment" blood pressure reading witnessed by the MDs, with the only dependent variable being the adjustment.

The chiropractic clinics were always free. Each day's work was barely contained in 18 hours of nonstop care, treating whomever showed up, whether prosperous citizens or peasants. Midnight would find the team back in their spartan quarters for a few hours of sleep, as the ship plied its way up the river to the next port of need. At nearly every port, the team was rewarded with a sumptuous banquet, a gift that represented many hours of agonized waiting in food lines, and probably a month's salary by each who added their

morsels to a feast the likes of which many of them had never seen or taken part. The doctors were truly humbled, and, as they would say, repaid for their work beyond what they could every have imagined.

Dr. Hagen said the rewards for their labors didn't end there: they had never been hugged and kissed by, and wept with so many people in their entire lives.

More than the sacrifice on everyone's part, beyond the joys, sorrows and frustrations, the chiropractic health care team realized not how much they had done, but how much more there was to do. Yes, much more than a "mission accomplished," Dr. Hagen said. The team's return to America was only the completion of the first step in an amazing journey of health, a cool drink of water for a people parched for hope after 70 years under communist domination.

The team may never know the breadth of its impact on the people, and perhaps the entire nation. Primarily because Ukraine is a nation much more aligned with the preventive health care philosophy of chiropractic, than America's medical model with its emphasis on correction and crisis management of health problems after they arise.

Open medical minds in a lecture hall at a top medical school on the other side of the world may call more chiropractors to Ukraine to take part in the next "revolution" in the former Soviet state. Dr. Hagen says if you hear that call, the Christian Chiropractors Association is assembling two more truck loads of supplies for the next trip.

Editor's note: Thomas Bache-Wiig is the director of the Sioux Falls and Sioux City, Iowa clinics owned and operated by Dr. Bruce C. Hagen Sr., and his son, Dr. Mark P. Hagen.

Dr. Hagen Sr., a Palmer graduate, also holds a BS from Westmar College. He has attended continuing education seminars at the Harvard School of Medicine, and the Harvard School of Public Health. Dr. Hagen, Sr., has been in practice for 40 years, beginning in Primgar, Iowa.



Page printed from:

http://www.chiroweb.com/mpacms/dc/article.php?id=41147&no_paginate=true&p_friendly=true&no_b=true