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Chiropractic at Havana Conference

By William Sisson, DC

During the last week of November, representatives of two chiropractic colleges and three individual doctors presented a 12-hour workshop on the principles and applications of chiropractic therapies, at the first Congress of the Cuban Society of Bioenergetic and Natural Medicine, BIONAT 2000, in Havana, Cuba. This was the first time that institutions of chiropractic education were specifically invited to represent the profession at an official function by the Cuban government.

Marcos Diaz Mastellari, MD, president of the organizing committee of the society sponsoring BIONAT 2000, with over 900 members, invited the presidents of four chiropractic colleges to attend the event. The Cuban medical professionals are open to the chiropractic philosophy and its holistic principles. This attitude was reflected in Dr. Mastellari's opening remarks, in which he applauded the individual efforts of several doctors since 1994 to introduce information about chiropractic on the island.

"Seeing the benefits, effectiveness, economy and usefulness in prevention for a large group of doctors here, we considered that it was time to give the final impulse for introducing this marvelous holistic modality in our country," Dr. Mastellari noted. "This was the primary objective of the chiropractic workshop in the Congress and it was clearly achieved."

Drs. Rick Thomas of Cleveland College (Kansas City) and Gary Schultz of Los Angeles College of Chiropractic (now the Southern California University of Health Sciences) officially represented their respective institutions. The group was rounded out by Drs. Leroy Perry of Los Angeles,* Bill Seplow of Miami, and myself. Drs. Thomas, Seplow and Perry were among those whom Dr. Mastellari applauded for their efforts in the mid-nineties.

In having the representatives of the institutions present, Dr. Mastellari hoped to begin forging the institutional links needed to formally train Cuban doctors in chiropractic techniques, so that the profession could grow within the country and add to the integrative approach the Cubans already use in caring for the

health care needs of their people. His outlook was hopeful. "We still have to deal with the obstacles posed by the blockade to definitively introducing chiropractic (in Cuba). I know that these are neither few nor easy (to overcome), but we are going to make the effort because the Cuban people have to have the right someday to have access to this exceptional fountain of health and well-being."

The workshop format was chosen to provide the attendees with a more intensive and personal exposure to chiropractic. At 12 hours, the chiropractic workshop was the longest of all those presented during the pre-conference period.

On day one, Dr. Thomas led off with an overview of chiropractic philosophy and biomechanical principles. His presentation included a demonstration of diversified adjusting, and evaluating the subluxation complex through motion and static palpation.

Dr. Schultz provided a comparison of the educational requirements of the chiropractic and medical curricula in the U.S. and finished with a description of chiropractic education.

On day two, Dr. Schultz, who is also a DACBR, conducted an in-depth review of radiographic imaging techniques and their application within the chiropractic profession.

The other two doctors and myself had previously been to Cuban:

- Dr. Seplow taught several classes on chiropractic at various institutes during the mid 1990s.
- Dr. Perry, a chiropractic orthopedist, had treated several Cuban Olympic athletes and participated in the National Council of Churches' efforts to resolve the Elian Gonzalez "tug-of-war" between Cuba and the United States. Each emphasized different aspects of chiropractic, thus demonstrating the unity variety and diversity with the profession.
- I returned after having presented a paper on dural release techniques at a conference in the city of Holguin in June.

On day one, Dr. Perry emphasized his sports science approach to postural analysis in looking for the cause of structural dysfunction. He also discussed protocols for exercise and treatment options for chronic and acute lumbar disc injuries.

Day two opened with my presentation on the importance of nutritional applications in chiropractic. I also demonstrated the applied kinesiology approach to aid in nutritional analysis, and conducted a brief hands-on

workshop in muscle testing. Participants were also able to observe the AK approach to structural analysis when I treated Dr. Seplow. Dr. Thomas remarked to the audience, "This is great! You now get to see how we get to the same place through different approaches."

Dr. Seplow treated the attendees to a demonstration of experimental testing procedures for evaluating various health problems via the nervous system. The Cubans were particularly interested in observing these procedures, and asked many questions about the assumptions and research underlying the procedures.

The chiropractic physicians left with a very positive feeling about the effects of the workshop. Numerous Cuban doctors representing different medical institutions issued invitations for the doctors to return and teach.

After fighting so long and so hard for our philosophy and approach to health to be accepted and included in our own health care system, the Cubans' openness to us is a joy to behold. If we let this opportunity (to bring chiropractic to Cuba) slip away, we'll only have ourselves to blame.

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- See "Chiropractic in Cuba: an Opportunity to Help 11,000,000 People," by Leroy Perry,DC, November 30, 2000, *DC*, or go to www.chiroweb.com/archives/18/25/05.html



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