

## **Chiropractic in Lancaster County**

By J. Calvin Wenger, D. C.

The Chiropractic profession was birthed nationwide in Davenport, Iowa in September 1895. It all started when a magnetic healer, Daniel David Palmer, noticed an unusual derangement in the cervical-thoracic spine of a deaf janitor by the name of Harvey Lillard. He performed a manipulation in this area and Mr. Lillard's hearing was restored. Thus began a process of patient care that eventually evolved into what today is known as the chiropractic profession.

A friend of Daniel Palmer, Rev. Samuel Weed, was fluent in Greek and suggested the procedure be called chiropractic, a practice performed by the use of hands.

During the next decade the first chiropractic school was established which is still operating and known now as the Palmer University of Chiropractic. Dr. David Palmer's son, Dr. B. J. Palmer, was an unusual and charismatic leader who succeeded his father and became known as the developer of chiropractic. His son Dr. David Pamler became a 3rd generation leader in the profession and married a Lancaster County native, Dr. Agnes High Palmer. In recent years, two other Palmer higher educational institutions have been established in San Jose, California and Port Orange, Florida.

Incidentally and interestingly, the other major manipulative health profession, osteopathy, was also discovered in the Mid-West in the latter 1800's in Swiftwater, Missouri by a practitioner by the name of Andrew Still.

The major premise of the chiropractic profession is that dysfunctional spinal articulations and pelvic structures will initiate disturbances with the function of the nervous system in a particular spinal area which in tandem negatively influences the normal functions of the body in that particular area. In sequence, multiple spinal-pelvic areas in similar modes of dysfunction can and do occur and, as a consequence, the harmony of the spinal and neuromuscular systems are compromised. This becomes a major factor in the body maintaining homeostatic function and healthy wellbeing.

Doctors of Chiropractic receive classroom and practical hands-on training to develop and hone their skills and procedures to detect these spinal dysfunctions, sometimes referred to as subluxations and then to bring modification and/or corrections to them. Most of this is accomplished manually but at times instruments, traction, dystraction, soft tissue Therapies and acupressure utilized. All chiropractic colleges have in addition, a full curriculum of the basic courses taught in accredited medical and healing arts colleges/universities with the exception of pharmacologic and medicine related disciplines.

Chiropractic introduction into the Lancaster County health scene came early in the second decade of the 1900's. Dr. R. D. Becker of Lancaster was one of the foremost pioneers and he practiced with much respect into the 1950's. Other highly appreciated DC's in the first half of the 20th century who contributed greatly and sacrificially to establish chiropractic as a recognized and respected health profession were Drs. J. R. Coder, S.G. Wenger, Gereon Burger,

Paula Seitz and Jonas Risser, all of Lancaster; Dr. S. K. Keiser and J. C. Keiser of Ephrata; Drs. R. J. Keiper of Elizabethtown (Incidentally, Dr. Keiper practiced for 63 continuous years which is the longest ever of any Lancaster County D.C.); Drs. E.Z. Martin and Phillip Basciano of New Holland; Dr. Stanley Smith of Manheim; Dr. Robert Shaub of Quarryville; Dr. Roy Hartmann of Intercourse; Dr. Thomas Berry of Strasburg; Dr. William Snyder of Columbia; Dr. Coleman Stites of Mt. Joy; Dr. Mary Howell of Lititz; and Dr. Aaron Blank of Christiana.

For the first half of the 20th century Pennsylvania chiropractors practiced without licensure and in the earlier years, some served jail terms upon being arrested for this. There was much prejudice and ridicule during these formative years but these dedicated and brave men and women stayed the course. Eventually, the Pennsylvania Medical Board crafted a Drugless Therapy category under which most DC's practiced until 1951. It was in that year after years of extensive legislative and oft failed efforts, the Pennsylvania Chiropractic Practice Enactment and Licensure Act was finally passed by both the Pennsylvania Senate and House and was signed into law by the late Governor John M. Packer.

Education for today's DC includes four years of pre medical type training in an accredited four-year college and four years of accredited chiropractic college/university schooling. Many post graduate programs are offered the practicing DC and annual certified courses must be completed to certify continued licensure.

Now, in the early 2000's Chiropractic is recognized, respected and licensed in all 50 states and numbers approximately 40,000 Doctors of Chiropractic in the United States, 2,100 plus in Pennsylvania and over 140 in Lancaster County. 24 fully accredited chiropractic colleges/universities are located in the USA and a dozen more in other countries. Extensive research facilities have been developed mostly associated with colleges and universities. From its beginning in the Keystone State, chiropractors have had neither the right nor the desire to utilize medical and surgical approaches in patient care. The aforementioned legislation specifically prohibits chiropractors from prescribing medicine, performing surgery, delivering babies and reducing fractures or dislocations.

Some chiropractors in recent years have developed specialties. Examples are care of injured discs, scoliosis attention, decompression techniques and applied kinesiology.

The core therapeutic approach of chiropractic science and art is the adjustment and manipulation of misaligned spinal vertebrae and pelvic components. Over the years, many chiropractors have expanded practice procedures to include adjustment and manipulation of all other body articulations, especially extremities. X-ray diagnostic services, physical therapy procedures, particularly interferential, ultra sound and laser therapy are the choice of a number of DC's. Cold packs, soft tissue therapies, orthopedic supports, orthotics, vitamin and herbal supplementation, exercise training and recommendations, rehabilitation services and training, and supportive counseling are other auxiliary procedures utilized by some DC's. Many practices today have massage therapists and a few have acupuncturists on site.

Relationships with the medical profession have improved tremendously over the years. Where at one time there was much antagonism and disrespect between these two professions,

there is presently a much improved cooperation and respect with DC's referring regularly to MD's/DO's accompanied by a definite increase in referral by physicians to chiropractors. It needs to be noted that historically the relationship between the chiropractic and osteopathic professions has been cordial and cooperative, probably because osteopathy started as a manipulative profession which it embraced for a number of years before transferring mostly to the medical model.

Traditionally, Chiropractors have not developed any hospitals or diagnostic facilities and do not have full hospital privileges with any Lancaster County hospital. In recent years a few DC's have limited affiliation with Heart of Lancaster Regional Medical Center. Most Lancaster County DC's refer to local hospitals and diagnostic centers for various tests and procedures.

For years, all Lancaster County chiropractic offices were one doctor operations but in the past four-five decades more group practices have been formed and are doing fairly well.

In today's health care status, the chiropractic profession faces most of the same challenges and frustrations as other health care professions. These include insurance domination, managed care and limited coverage, government control and infringement, regulations, cumbersome paperwork and increasing documentation requirements. DC's yearn for the primary focus to be on patient care and genuine patient-doctor relationships.

This should always remain the primary goal in the delivery of health care and the chiropractic profession is dedicated to this purpose and pursuit.

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