

Groundbreaking Internship Program at Bethesda National Naval Medical Center

Editorial Staff

Internships for chiropractic students at hospitals are rare occurrences, but NYCC student Wayne Carlson wanted such an opportunity. Being an enterprising young man, he mentioned his interest to his gastroenterologist, who in turn mentioned it to a friend, who brought it to the attention of DCs Terence Kearney and William Morgan at Bethesda National Naval Medical Center, where they worked as contracted chiropractors under the Department of Defense's Chiropractic Demonstration Project.

Bethesda National Naval Medical Center is a high-profile hospital, one that cares for many political VIPs: presidents, congressmen senators, justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, and foreign dignitaries and heads of state. As Bethesda has been very supportive of DCs Kearney and Morgan and the chiropractic clinic, and knowing that the hospital is a strong advocate of graduate medical education, the chiropractors were not hesitant to present the idea of a chiropractic internship program to the department heads of the various clinics at the hospital. The chiropractors next contacted the hospital's credentialing department, and then began discussions with NYCC faculty members Matt Cot³,DC, and Lee Van Dusen,DC.

After working out the necessary credentialing details with NYCC and Bethesda, and an OK from the hospital board, both parties signed a "memorandum of understanding." Signing the document for the hospital was commanding officer Rear-Admiral Kathleen Martin.

"Dr. Van Dusen and Dr. Cot³ both made putting this agreement together easy and relatively trouble free," noted Dr. Kearney. "We would like to thank them and Dr. Frank Nicchi, president of NYCC, for all their work and continuing support," he added.

The internship program began this past summer, but student Wayne Carlson, the catalyst for the internship, would not be the inaugural intern. By the time the memorandum of understanding had been signed, Wayne had graduated and was no longer eligible for the internship. The first recipient was Gerald Stevens, a tenth trimester student at NYCC. "He is the first of what we hope will be many interns who will train in our hospital," said Dr. Morgan.

"What is unique in the intern program is that these interns will be able to perform rotations through some of the other specialties here at the hospital, and also be able to treat patients with chiropractic," explained Dr. Morgan. Intern Stevens did rotations in dermatology; orthopedics; physical medicine; neurosurgery; neurology; radiology; neurora-diology; and physical therapy.

"Gerald Stevens also watched several surgical procedures. His rotations were divided into a daily routine of spending the morning in surgery or in a medical clinic and his afternoons in the chiropractic clinic," explained Dr. Morgan. The intern's examinations and treatments in the chiropractic clinic were, of course, performed under the supervision of the staff.

At the end of August, two more NYCC interns began at Bethesda. Their rotations will extend through the end of November. "The program is evolving to a more structured format," observed Dr.

Morgan, "but will maintain enough flexibility to allow a wide range of experiences for the interns."

Dr. Kearney, who previously was assigned to the David Grant Medical Center at Travis Air Force Base in California to provide chiropractic care under the Chiropractic Demonstration Project, notes that a chiropractic internship program was proposed by Dr. Slade, an MD, at Travis. The program did not however proceed, because it was felt that it might interfere with the research data that was being collected for the demonstration project. Drs. Kearney and Morgan told DC that a chiropractic internship program is under negotiation with the Southern California University of Health Sciences (formerly LACC) and the Naval Hospital at Camp Pendleton, California, another site of the Chiropractic Demonstration Project.

Drs. Kearney and Morgan hope this style of internship will pioneer chiropractic education out of the current model of training into a mentor/residency model of education, and become the norm at military training hospitals and VA hospitals. "Chiropractic education has lots of classroom work, but little clinical exposure to disease, pathology or acute orthopedic injury," asserted Dr. Morgan. "Hospital-based internships will expose these young doctors to conditions that until now most chiropractors have only read about."

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