

Chiropractic Education Expands in the U.K.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

Joseph Morley

Editor's note: The University of Surrey, England is offering a 2 1/2 year master's degree program in chiropractic for health science professionals and graduate students. The program's first class (12 students) commenced in September 1997.

The Surrey campus is located in Guildford, which lies on the southwest outskirts of the greater London sprawl. The university matriculates 8,500 students from 110 countries, and is home to what is referred to in Europe as a "research park," where, in this case, the only satellite company in the country builds and launches small communication and remote sensing satellites.

Heading the chiropractic program at the U. of Surrey is Dr. Joseph Morley, who has been kind enough to present this report to DC readers:

In late December 1996, I was approached by a faculty member of the University of Surrey who said that the university might be interested in a chiropractic programme. I met with members of the European Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (EIHMS), a school of the University of Surrey. They thought that my proposed master's degree (MSc) chiropractic programme had merit and that it fit in with one of their objectives: to develop multidisciplinary and multiprofessional health-related courses.

I was very impressed by the vision and multidisciplinary emphasis of the EIHMS. Our goals coincided, and I felt that initiating a master's level chiropractic programme would be the best way that I could contribute to the advancement of the chiropractic profession.

After five months of very hard work, the MSc in chiropractic was validated by the University of Surrey in June, 1997. The validation event included representatives from the British Chiropractic Association (BCA), the European Council on Chiropractic Education (ECCE), the medical profession and university academics. The ECCE was very helpful in giving advice prior to validation, and I thank them personally. The EIHMS staff played a key role in helping to prepare the documents for validation.

Validation of a new course by a university is a lengthy and difficult procedure involving stages in which it must be shown that:

1. The course is viable financially.
2. The course can be supported by resources.
3. The academic content and delivery of the course will be up to university standards.
4. Professional regulating bodies are involved in the validation procedure.

Since universities rarely validate courses proposed by individuals, it was personally gratifying to have succeeded on the first try.

The aims in establishing this programme were:

1. to develop a chiropractic programme that would meet the high academic and professional international standards already established at chiropractic training institutions around the world;
2. to develop chiropractors formally trained in research;
3. to establish a world-class research centre and team within a university for the chiropractic profession.

The research aspect is being emphasised heavily because our professional advances have come about largely due to research. There is no reason that a chiropractic research department within a university cannot be on a par with research departments in other fields.

To increase the research profile of our profession, I believe that we must work within the university sector. There are more research facilities, staff and potential for obtaining funding and more influence available within the university system. I believe that eventually it will be easier to attract top class researchers to work within the university sector. At the University of Surrey, we will have the opportunity to do collaborative research projects with the newly created Robens Centres for Health Ergonomics and Occupational Health and Safety, now part of the EIHMS.

In addition, we will be able to do research projects with the biomedical engineering group, the nutrition group and other schools within the University of Surrey. The University of Surrey already has an excellent reputation in research. This will greatly enhance the chances of successfully developing our research programme in chiropractic.

The professional, educational and academic expertise available at a university, combined with the research possibilities and the opportunities for research funding, will all enrich the students and the profession. In my opinion, the future of chiropractic education, certainly within Europe, lies within the university sector.

Our programme is comprised of 20 academic modules, the MSc dissertation and the practical clinic training. Students enrolling in the programme must have a BSc degree that includes biomedical subjects, or they must be qualified health care professionals with a sufficient knowledge of basic biomedical subjects. We are taking students who have a BSc degree and then training them for two years and four months (seven semesters according to the American system of chiropractic education; we have no summer breaks). In addition, virtually all of the students have done a research project as part of their BSc degree.

As can be seen, our programme is not a shortcut to becoming a chiropractor. We emphasise differential diagnosis because we are training primary care practitioners, not technicians. Established international standards for chiropractic education will be the only guideline for our programme. ECCE accreditation as soon as possible is our goal.

The MSc programme in chiropractic at the University of Surrey commenced with its first intake of students on 29 September, 1997. We have been running the programme for nine months now, and its success depends to a large extent upon the people involved in lecturing and administration. Besides myself, there is another full-time chiropractor involved in the programme, Dr. Palle Pedersen.

We've had lecturers from within the university's biomedical engineering group and physics department, from the Radiation Protection Service, from the Royal Surrey County Hospital, from the pathology profession and from the chiropractic profession. Local chiropractors have had our

students visit their clinics to observe treatment.

Starting in September, 1998 our students will be encouraged to attend the weekly case presentations meeting at the hospital. Very soon, I hope to be finalising negotiations for a permanent clinic site of over 3,000 square feet.

It has been a very busy year and we will be welcoming our second intake of students in September, 1998. We hope to build upon successes of the first year and continue to improve our programme.

The future for chiropractic in the U.K. is very bright. The rancor that existed between medicine and chiropractic in the USA does not seem to exist here. Relations and cooperation between the two professions seems to be much better in the U.K. than in the USA. In my opinion, this is due to the excellent work of the BCA in promoting interprofessional cooperation at the practice level and at the scientific/research level. In American terms, the U.K. has a wide scope of practice that could quite easily be abused. Fortunately, the BCA's chiropractors are professionally and politically mature and responsible, so the unscientific extremists in our profession do not have much influence in the U.K., nor are they likely to have.

A lot has been accomplished in a short period, but the hard work is just starting. We are beginning small, but will grow. In the spring of 1999, we are moving into a new building that will have an ergonomics laboratory, a gait analysis laboratory and our own chiropractic technique room, in addition to other classrooms. Anyone who visits the U.K. is welcome to visit the University of Surrey. If you have any comments, positive or negative, contact me.

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