

Chiropractic's Grand Opening at Camp Pendleton

Editorial Staff

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. -- Every one was there, from base commander Major General Reinke to a number of enlisted patients who had already been enjoying chiropractic care at Camp Pendleton for two months. The event was the official grand opening of the chiropractic clinic at the Naval Hospital at Camp Pendleton in Southern California, just east of San Clemente. The Camp Pendleton chiropractic clinic is one of 10 taking part in the Chiropractic Health Care Demonstration Program (CHCDP) established by the US Department of Defense (DOD).

Out of over 200 DC applicants, the Naval Hospital had narrowed it down to a dozen. It was from this pool that Drs. Scott Gilford and Jeffrey Schneider emerged as the two chiropractors that would serve the over 35,000 military personnel at Camp Pendleton over the next three years.

Camp Pendleton is one of the larger U.S. military bases, covering 250 square miles with an on base population of over 100,000. Entering the base's main gate, you travel a good 10 miles before you arrive at the facility's hospital. Drs. Schneider and Gilford practice in the south wing on the third floor of the Naval Hospital as a division of the Sports Medicine Department. Their area includes two treatment rooms, two therapy rooms and a front office. They are aided by CAs Wanda York, and Corpsman Assistant HM3 Jorge Vanderflour.

Because the base is so large, there is a second hospital facility on the northern end of Camp Pendleton. This is the infantry area where many of the marines are stationed.

"I think we are very fortunate that the Naval Hospital at Camp Pendleton was chosen as one of the demonstration sites," said hospital commander Capt. Bonnie Potter in her opening remarks. "We really saw this as a unique opportunity to improve our services to the active duty marines and sailors. To date, two-thirds of the patients report significant improvement from their chiropractic care and no one has gotten worse from care."

Commander Joseph Moore, MD, who heads up the Sports Medicine Dept., echoed the same sentiment: "With out Sports Medicine Department and now with chiropractic on board, we are light years ahead of what we were providing the Marines."

The demonstration project is being conducted under a number of parameters (please see "The Military Demonstration Project - How Will Chiropractic Be Judged" in the September 12, 1995 issue). One of those parameters is to "follow practice guidelines as established in the Guidelines for Chiropractic Quality Assurance and Practice Parameters" (better known as the Mercy Guidelines. Commander Moore commented about the necessity of practice guidelines: "As we standardized treatment protocols as much as possible, the different treatment programs can be brought together. The Mercy Guidelines allow us to speak the same language."

This has definitely been a learning experience for all concerned. As Capt. Potter put it: "We needed to educate our chiropractors and their assistants about how we do things in the military." Right now, Drs. Gilford and Schneider are only able to care for the 35,000 military personnel. There is an

entire dependent and retired community which could increase that number almost five-fold to 174,000. they obviously have their work cut out for them.

But this is a military demonstration project, and there are still some gray areas that need to be addressed:

- Patients currently receive chiropractic care through a military consult. Could this be modified to allow self referral?
- This is the military. Where does chiropractic fit into when it comes to war?
- Chiropractic's effectiveness is not really in question, but their ability to work within the military model. What will the military and political policy makers decide when the demonstration project is over? Will chiropractic care be made available to all military personnel and their beneficiaries?

The program is just beginning. It will continue for a total of three years. Only time will tell where chiropractic will ultimately be utilized within the US military.

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