

Introducing Chiropractic in Estonia

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It may be of interest to you to hear the steps being taken to provide chiropractic care to Estonia. Estonia is a country on the Baltic Sea near Finland and Russia, which regained its freedom in 1991 after 50 years of Soviet suppression.

I am of Estonian descent but was never able to visit the country due to the communist occupation, and the fact that my brother was sent to a Siberian concentration camp for eight years for trying to escape the country.

Although I do not speak the Estonia language well, I have always had a passion for Estonia and the plight of its people. After the Soviet Union fell apart and Estonia regained its freedom, I made it a mission to visit the land of my roots. I flew there in September 1992 to stay with a couple I knew who had started a hotel and restaurant business in Tallinn, the largest city in Estonia. Before I arrived, I asked my friends to put a small notice in the Tallinn newspaper that a "back and neck" doctor ("chiropractor" would not have been comprehended) would be at the hotel for four hours on a Sunday afternoon to diagnose and treat their conditions.

When I arrived at the hotel in Tallinn on the appointed time there were, to my amazement, 200 people waiting inside the lobby and spilling out into the street. I worked that day and the following week like I have never worked before. Each day was 12-14 hours. Food had to be brought to the treatment room, as I did not leave for the duration. A number of radio stations came to interview me. I have never seen so many interesting, challenging and severe problems in all my 15 years of practice. It was a wonderfully enlightening, educational, and fulfilling experience.

I vowed to continue providing the Estonian people with chiropractic care, although I would not personally be able to practice there. Before my second trip to Estonia in August 1993, a press conference was arranged. The response was unbelievable. Three major newspapers in Estonia carried the story. An example of one of the headlines was "Mis on kiropraktika?" ("What is chiropractic?"). All the press coverage was exceptionally positive and most certainly helped to inform a very large number of Estonians about chiropractic. I also wrote an article on sports and chiropractic in Estonia's largest sports magazine, Sporti Taht.

Tallinn's first private medical clinic (TOPMED) had recently opened, and doctors there provided space for me to set up a temporary clinic during my stay. The MDs there quite simply did not know what to do with the type of problems that only chiropractic can help. In one case, a patient that had sciatica was operated on by Russian doctors who cut out her piriformis. The surgery left her crippled. Her husband drove four hours every day to bring her to me. She attained some relief with the care I provided. I have never seen so many tears of joy or received so many gifts and hugs in all my life.

Before I left, I meet with the Estonia Minister of Health. We discussed the premise of chiropractic care and the education of DCs, and how chiropractic might be formally integrated in the Estonian health care picture. Licensing standards and guidelines were also discussed. I informed her that I planned to set up either an internship program for chiropractic fourth year students, or give new

graduates the option of practicing in Estonia there for one or two months following graduation.

I set up a table at the practice opportunities night at the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College, which gathered considerable interest. Students interested in visiting Europe before they began a practice found doing a one-two month "locum" in Estonia as the perfect stepping stone to seeing Europe and getting incredible practical experience before beginning practice in North America. I have also met with CMCC President Dr. Jean Moss, who has offered whatever support the college is able to give if this becomes viable.

David Champan Smith, secretary general of the World Federation of Chiropractic General, has offered the WFC's help in my efforts in Estonia, and offered to meet with Estonian health officials at the annual meeting of the World Health Organization in Geneva.

The possibility of an Estonia chiropractic scholarship fund has also been discussed with Estonian officials.

One student from CMCC, Dan Yorun, is all but confirmed to go to Estonia and seems quiet excited about the prospect. The only problem is that we require funding (traveling expenses, clinic set up, and operating costs, living expenses).

Any organization interested in assisting this cause please contact me. If you are a student or a doctor and would be interested in going to Estonia for a short stay to practice and help the people, I'd also like to hear from you.

Estonia has been hailed as the future economic "Hong Kong of the Northeast" by many business publications. Tremendous opportunity and experience awaits you there if you choose to take it.

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Editor's note: Dr. Oolo, a graduate of the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College (CMCC), is president of the Scarborough Chiropractic Society, and member of the Ontario Chiropractic Association, the Canadian Chiropractic Association, the ACA, and the Hawaiian Chiropractic Association. He is a diplomate of the American Board of Chiropractic Examiners, a fellow of the International Academy of Clinical Acupuncture, and a member of the Canadian Council of Chiropractic Sports Sciences. A past guest lecturer on manipulation to the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine, Dr. Oolo is a consultant and columnist for the newsletter Lifestyle and Wellness, and has been published in the American Chiropractor, and Today's Chiropractic. He is a black belt in karate.

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