

Chiropractic's First Steps in Hungary

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Having lived in Sweden for four years prior to moving to Hungary in October 1989, we became quite aware of the wide chasm in which chiropractic is cast on this side of the Atlantic. With no universal standards yet established for chiropractic in Europe, it is difficult to know how chiropractic is received from nation to nation, or a countries' stage of chiropractic development.

In April 1989, my father, Dr. Eugene R. Anderson and I came to Hungary to do an interview for Hungarian television on chiropractic. We saw first-hand the tremendous interest in chiropractic by the laypeople and the health authorities. We made the decision to try and prevent what we saw develop in Sweden, where some 5,500 people calling themselves chiropractors practice, but only 85 of them have graduated from a CCE accredited college.

When we moved to Hungary in 1989, we found the country in the middle of political transition. We began by dealing directly with the government: The Minister of Health, Judit Chehak, was very supportive and wanted to see chiropractic included under socialized health care.

After the elections in March 1990, Hungary set about to drastically alter its health care policy. From the beginning of the new government we have taken upon ourselves to educate the new officials in the Ministry of Health on the benefits of chiropractic to its populace, as well as their pocketbook. We explain that chiropractic, above all other health care professions, can get people back to work in less time and at a lower cost to the state. These benefits are of paramount interest to the government of Hungary.

To facilitate the educational process of chiropractic's benefits, we opened our first clinic in February 1990 in a town an hour's drive from Budapest, on the Czechoslovakian border. This clinic is the proving ground for both the Hungarian and Slovakian medical community. Another clinic was opened as of February 1991 with five more planned for this year. The Budapest clinic has a two fold function: an outpatient clinic catering to the diplomatic and foreign investment community; and a center to carry on a research project proving the efficacy of chiropractic.

To carry out the research program, we are very thankful to Life College and Dr. Sid Williams. Through the Life Around the World (LAW) program, we have received a tremendous amount of assistance and support. The data collected will be given to the Hungarian Ministry of Health, along with other similar studies done in other countries. This information is crucial to the process of getting laws established protecting chiropractic as an art, science, and philosophy.

With the establishment of several clinics, the results of the research program and our constant barrage via television, radio, and printed media, we hope to give an overall positive exposure for chiropractic in Hungary. The Ministry of Health is aware of and supportive of our complicated but serious endeavor: the opening of our educational facility in Budapest and teaching chiropractic according to the guidelines laid down by the CCE. We have a contractual relationship with a very fine facility and one awaiting the final approval from the appropriate authorities. All courses will be taught in the international language, English.

In 1990, the European Chiropractic Foundation (ECF) was formed under the laws of Hungary. With its board of directors consisting of doctors of chiropractic and medical professionals, we have established an excellent rapport between the foundation and governing bodies and associations. The ECF has adopted a set of standards and goals which protect and promote chiropractic as an art, science and philosophy, as well as a portal of entry into the health care system. We are also in the process of contacting like-minded foundations and international organizations to share information and ideas. Representatives of the various medical communities and health ministries from the Ukraine, Slovakia, and Romania have made contact with us, as have Austrian and German insurance companies, all interested in working with the ECF with respect to chiropractic.

This short synopsis on chiropractic in Hungary would not be complete without discussing two very important situations which are developing. One of the few positive developments of Hungary's 45 unfortunate years of communist domination was that upward mobility in that society had little correlation to financial success. Hungary's ethics in medicine did not become clouded. Services were given on the basis of cost effectiveness not on the depth of the patients' pockets. In Hungary, as in most socialist/communist countries, health care was considered "free," being paid from the 43 percent taxed on gross salaries. The con to this seemingly pro situation was a pathetic disregard for the patient. The doctors complained of low salaries (approximately \$150 per month net). Their disenchantment led to the attitude, "We get paid the same if we see 30 patients per day or just a couple." Sadly, what developed was people paying doctors under the table to receive the service they required and were supposedly getting "free of charge."

Those suffering from neuromusculoskeletal disorders received a standard procedure for care: three weeks on their back with pain killers or the scalpel. Many doctors looked for alternatives. With the word of chiropractic reaching Hungary, many medical professionals and laymen alike began treating people by manipulating the spine. The Hungarian term is "csontkovacs," translated as "bonesmith."

This brings up our second point and the interest of the European Chiropractic Foundation (ECF). Much enthusiasm was generated over "miracle cures" from manipulating the spine. With no laws or guidelines instituted, many started adapting the word "chiropractic" and "chiropractic treatments." We support and understand the enthusiasm for the many positive results achieved, but would like to see a distinction between those who treat chiropractically based upon educational criteria as in the guidelines of the CCE and those presently giving gross manipulations.

Over all, our experience in Hungary has been a positive one. The people here are grateful to have doctors who care for them and offer them an alternative treatment that relieves their pain. The response to our presence here has been overwhelming. Patients have traveled long distances by car or train to be treated by the American chiropractors. We have treated hundreds of patients and will continue treating many more as chiropractic gains strength in this country. Although there is still much work ahead to rebuild the country to its former economic and aesthetic stature it held prior to communist rule, we see a bright future ahead, a future that includes chiropractic.

Although the ECF is greatly appreciative of all the support it has received in the past, the ECF would be very interested in hearing from DCs wishing to partake in our activities in Hungary. We will be opening several additional clinics throughout Hungary this year. Any DC wishing to work in one of these clinics is kindly requested to contact the ECF.

We have come a long way in the past two years in Hungary and look forward to even greater strides in the years to come. However, it gets tough carrying on these activities alone. Without the support of the LAW program at LIFE, we would have never achieved what we have. With the economic integration of Europe coming in 1992 and countries such as Hungary waiting for

admission, now is the time to lay the groundwork for chiropractic in Eastern Europe. Let us not leave them out of the picture, but instead nurture them into shining examples of what chiropractic has to offer Europe. To accomplish this, the support of fellow chiropractors is essential and necessary.

Author's note: The ECF was founded under Hungarian law in 1990. The foundation is the first official chiropractic organization within Eastern Europe and the USSR.

For further information you may contact the foundation at:

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