

Mali, West Africa Challenges Christian Chiropractor

Bruce Kniegge

It all started when resident Christian Missionaries of Mali, West Africa, sent a request through one of their colleagues to the missions director of the Christian Chiropractors Association.

The phone rang at the home office and the request came: "I am from the gospel Missionary Union (GMU) of Mali, West Africa. I am home in the United States on furlough and I represent 30 missionaries. Their first request is for me to find a chiropractor for them." The CCA missions director located Dr. Richard Behrend of Jasper, Missouri, a CCA member doctor, who rose to the challenge. Herein is his account:

"As I was looking out the window of my plane on its final approach to the airport in Mali, I was relieved to know this was the end of a 30-hour air trip. I could see miles of open land without roads. The living and existing road conditions are very hard. A standing joke is: "If you didn't have a back problem when you came, it won't be long before you do."

"On the first evening of my arrival at the mission station, the scope and activities of my short-term mission agenda were explained and discussed.

"First, most of the missionaries had to travel 800 to 1,000 miles to the Ivory Coast, to the Baptist Hospital, for comprehensive health care comparable to care in the United States.

"Second, there had never been a chiropractor here to deliver chiropractic care. The closest chiropractic care was three to five thousand miles away in Canada or the United States, at a cost of \$4,000 to \$5,000 per person.

"News of my arrival preceded me and the patient population was spread into several categories:

A- Resident missionaries, both long and short (2-4 year) terms. Some had experienced previous chiropractic care while others had received no previous care. This category also included people from the foreign embassies.

B- Resident African Christian nationals, most with no previous chiropractic care.

C- African nationals without any previous care whatsoever.

"The clinic was set up at the GMU guest house in Bomako and the schedule began very early in the morning in order to beat the intense heat. The cases responded well and all were warmly appreciative of the care. I provided care for a Christian national who was traumatized after falling into a hole while running in the bush. He complained of constant low back pain with radiating pain into his leg, with concomitant difficulty in walking. Through an interpreter, I learned that this trauma occurred 15 to 18 years

ago. After several treatments and 14 days later, he was greatly excited to report that his pain was nearly totally gone, along with no pain in walking. I did not realize how important all this was until it was explained that walking was his only mode of transportation and a walking disability could mean death, in view of the fact that his disability was becoming more and more acute. All that was needed was a relatively simple chiropractic procedure.

"An interesting case involved the wife of an African national medical doctor. She was a mid-wife heavily involved in the local hospital. She had been suffering for years with low back, hip and leg pains exacerbated by her long periods of standing at her hospital regime. Within two treatments, she was responding very well. Her husband, medically trained in Poland, was most thankful and consulted me for a headache problem he was having. He also responded positively to chiropractic care. He subsequently took me on a tour of the local hospital, the conditions of which taxed his conscientious competency.

"There appears to be a very serious need for chiropractic care in Mali, ranging from the resident missionary through the gamut and culture of the African people. When the mass feeding programs were finished in Africa, many turned to and received Jesus Christ as savior because of the pure and simple kindness shown to them.

"I feel that my providing chiropractic care will make a lasting and deep impression for our Lord, that words cannot express."

Richard R. Behrend, D.C
Jasper, Missouri

There are three important factors I would like to stress.

First, travel to Africa is somewhat hard and long. Consideration must be given to candidates' travel abilities.

Secondly, while comprehensive chiropractic care may not be feasible, simple procedures may be performed with great success on a short-term basis.

Thirdly, the obvious need for chiropractic care can be justified even with one or intermittent visits in a land where all or any doctors are scarce and medical supplies and attention are very sparse. While there is an obvious problem of malaria, TB, and dysentery, there remains a great many neck, back, and spine-related problems which need chiropractic attention.

Our association, the Christian Chiropractors Association, has many global chiropractic mission concerns, more than they can respond to. My prayer and hope would be to establish an ongoing short-term mission response which would develop into a permanent clinic.

Doctors in Australia may direct their inquiries to:

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