

The World View of Chiropractic

Arlan Fuhr, DC

Earlier this year, I attended the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC) [Biennial Congress in Montreal](#). This gathering of chiropractic physicians and health care and business professionals from around the world has become the premier meeting in our industry. More than 900 attendees traveled from locations far and wide; clearly, chiropractic is exploding exponentially beyond the U.S.

My experiences at the WFC were thought-provoking and have remained top of mind, so for those who could not attend the event, I wanted to share some of the highlights. One of those highlights was a presentation from [David Eisenberg, MD, of Harvard](#). In his lecture, Dr. Eisenberg provided a summary of a 2002 study funded by the [National Institutes of Health](#) that focused on designing, implementing and testing a model of integrative care in an academic teaching hospital.

The vision of this model was to bring together allopathic physicians with chiropractic physicians, acupuncturists, massage therapists, nutritionists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, *tai chi* and yoga instructors, and behavioral health professionals, all working as a coordinated team. Keep in mind that working in this fashion takes a lot of advance work and commitment from everyone involved. For example, an anthropologist led an effort to help the team members from each discipline learn and, more importantly, understand the different vernacular integral to each discipline. I certainly don't envy that challenge, as our chiropractic language (which we take for granted) is complicated, let alone the terminology of the other disciplines!

The adult patients included in the study suffered from subacute low back pain and were treated using this collaborative approach. Preliminary results from the study suggested this health care model is viable and should be tested in fully-powered randomized, controlled trials. In fact, such a collaborative model is currently being discussed widely throughout our own federal government, as elected officials once again embark on a major health care reform movement.

Dr. Eisenberg also shared some very powerful testimony about how a group working together and learning to respect each other's strengths positively influenced a patient's recovery. He shared some additional preliminary data that has not yet been published - thus, I cannot share particular details - but rest assured, based on the research findings, the team approach is clearly in the patient's best interest.

Another highlight of the biennial congress was the presentation by George Benjamin, MD, which I felt was particularly profound. Dr. Benjamin is president of the [American Public Health Association](#), and though I have heard him speak before, this presentation struck me differently this time. He asked us what we thought were the root causes of today's health care problems. Most doctors in the audience suggested the problems hailed from smoking, pollution, unhealthy diets and other such obvious choices. But when Dr. Benjamin explained that *poverty* was the primary root cause, everyone was taken aback. He explained that simply having access to clean water would save more people than all the vaccines in the world. It reminded me that we are fortunate to live in a developed nation with social services that keep much of what we would define as true poverty at bay.

Visiting the congress from the Republic of Congo was [Sister Brigitte Yengo](#), DC, MD, who runs an orphanage for 50 children all under the age of 10. The majority of these orphaned children are victims of civil war, which has contributed to the extreme poverty in the Congo. Listening to Sister Yengo's firsthand experiences reinforced Dr. Benjamin's comments and certainly gave reality to the concept that poverty is the biggest danger to public health. Sister Yengo also reminded the doctors present that they needed to humble themselves and remember the sacred trust of the doctor-patient relationship.

I share these insights from my time at the WFC Congress because I think it is very easy for us to become so engrossed in our daily lives that we forget why we became doctors of chiropractic in the first place. Visiting with people from around the world and hearing their stories, learning about new research that extends beyond our normal scope, and expanding our personal horizons, if only for a few days, reminded me why I chose a career focused on patient care. I hope each of you has an opportunity to attend the WFC Congress at some point in your career. What you receive in return - an entirely new perspective on the world of chiropractic - is far greater than the cost of time or money to attend.

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