

The Chiropractic Action Team (CAT): Solidarity Through Service

Jennifer Lovern, DC, DIBCN, CCSP, FASA, FICC

In response to the devastating earthquake that struck the Italian city of L'Aquila in 2009 - and for the first time in chiropractic's history on the European continent - a six-month contract of collaboration was successfully completed between the Italian Red Cross and the Association of Italian Chiropractors (AIC) and European Chiropractors' Union (ECU). This landmark project led to a creation of an emergency response unit known as the [Chiropractic Action Team](#), which served inside the Red Cross "infirmiry tents" in the various camps of the earthquake zone. True solidarity was displayed as National Guard members, firefighters, Red Cross medical doctors and volunteers, and CAT chiropractors worked together around the clock to save people's lives and help in any way possible during the emergency relief operations.

Sincere appreciation of chiropractic and insistence from the [Red Cross](#) relief workers in the earthquake zone motivated me, as president of CAT, to meet with Francesco Rocca, commissioner of the Italian Red Cross, at the conclusion of the AIC's contract of service. Thanks to the professionalism and effective treatments exhibited by the 85 AIC-ECU chiropractors who participated in the 2009 earthquake relief efforts, we discussed a follow-up project for 2010 in northern Italy. Commissioner Rocca approved the creation of a chiropractic "infirmiry" clinic inside the Milan Emergency Center.

This is also a six-month contract, scheduled to run from September 2010 until March 2011. At its conclusion, the contract can be renewed if the three parties - AIC, Italian Red Cross or CAT - so desire. The project will be composed of many different phases, including service, research and community outreach. The clinic will be serviced a few hours on Saturdays by local AIC chiropractors on a volunteer basis, potentially leading to paid positions that would involve educating the 97,000 Italian Red Cross members on the importance of chiropractic care, stretching and proper posture. The aim is to facilitate the provision of on-site support by chiropractors for Red Cross volunteers and staff not only during emergency situations, but also before and after with monthly preventive lectures titled, "Protect Your Back."

In order to move forward on an international level, CAT has grown to become an independent non-governmental entity with the purpose to serve as the bridge between national chiropractic associations and national Red Cross societies. CAT's executive board communicates directly with the Red Cross at the national level and creates mutually beneficial partnerships for each of the involved parties. Through these partnerships, organizations like the Association of Italian Chiropractors and the Italian Red Cross are achieving their goals by strengthening outreach efforts and bringing education and assistance to thousands.

The purpose of CAT's collaborative projects with the Red Cross is to create a template within the disaster relief environment - as well as for times of tranquility with the lecture series - that can be replicated in other Red Cross facilities all over the world. It is impossible to predict where the next disaster will occur and which Red Cross national society will be required to participate. Formalizing a relationship now between the Red Cross and the chiropractic profession on a

worldwide level will make it easier for future disaster interventions.

The CAT organization is currently building its worldwide membership database called the Disaster Response Network (DRN), which is open to any licensed doctor of chiropractic. The chiropractic DRN allows the profession to prepare our colleagues to deliver the most beneficial procedures in this unique environment. The DRN consists of pre-screened chiropractors who have the experience and/or desire to serve in the emergency care arena. In the future, members of the DRN will be invited to attend training sessions designed to protect and ensure the safety of these participating chiropractors so they are ready to serve in the stabilized facilities of the Red Cross during disaster operations.

At Parker Seminars Rome in June 2010, AIC President Dr. John Williams was honored by the Italian Red Cross with a token of appreciation in the form of a commemorative plaque for his extraordinary contribution to the 2009 relief efforts. Italian Red Cross [T-shirts for Haiti](#) were sold by members of CAT and organized by Dr. Marie Turgot of the AIC, who was honored at the first annual CAT reunion and strategy meeting on June 26 for her humanitarian efforts over the past year. Dr. Anthony Page of Italy and Parker College President Dr. Fabrizio Mancini were also honored for their efforts.

A ceremony marking the opening of the first-ever chiropractic clinic inside a Red Cross structure (inside the Milan Emergency Center in Bresso, Italy) will take place this year on the anniversary of chiropractic, Sept. 18, 2010. Dr. Williams will present a check to the president of the Milan Red Cross on behalf of the AIC for 2010's fund-raising efforts for Haiti.

The example set by the Italian association sends a strong statement to the rest of the profession that one country can make a big difference for chiropractic in the world, and that the greatest thing one person can do is to volunteer their services to another person in times of need. To learn more about the Chiropractic Action Team, please visit www.chiroaction.org.

Dr. Jennifer Lovern is the director of the emergency chiropractic support organization Chiropractic Action Team. A 2003 graduate of Cleveland Chiropractic College - Los Angeles, she moved to Italy in 2005 and was operating her own practice in central Italy when the 2009 earthquake struck. Currently, she is working for a doctor in California, but plans on returning to Italy to practice and coordinate future CAT projects.

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