



IN REMEMBRANCE

## Remembering a Chiropractic Pioneer: Dr. John Sweaney

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The WFC is saddened to report the passing of one of its past presidents, John A. Sweaney, AM, DC, DSc (Hon.), FICC, FACC, who died on March 13, 2019, at the age of 72.

Dr. Sweaney held the office of president from 1995-1998, a period of great achievement for the WFC. Under his leadership, the WFC was accepted into official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO).

His greatest professional achievement was being invited by WHO to act as consultant and principal author of the 2005 *WHO Guidelines on Basic Training and Safety in Chiropractic*, which has since been translated into 11 languages and has been used to influence chiropractic legislation and education globally. This achievement remains a major milestone in the chiropractic profession.



Such was his influence on the chiropractic profession that in 2006, to honor his contribution, a biennial lecture, the [John A. Sweaney Lecture](#), was established in his name. It was poignant that, just days after his death, the 2019 John A. Sweaney Lecture was presented by the CEO of the Australian Chiropractors Association, Dr. Matthew Fisher.

At the WFC Assembly of Members, held recently in Berlin, Germany, leaders from around the world stood in silent tribute as a mark of respect, while on the day of his funeral, friend and former colleague Mr. David Chapman-Smith delivered a moving tribute to Dr. Sweaney at the WFC Congress, outlining his outstanding contribution to chiropractic in Australia and around the world.

John Alexander Sweaney graduated with honors from Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College in 1968. He returned to his native Australia, where he established a practice and assumed leadership positions in state and national associations, before later becoming involved in educational and regulatory bodies.

Dr. Sweaney served as the president of the Australian Chiropractors' Association from 1979 to 1981 before serving as its executive director from 1985 to 1999. During this time, he was the principal author of many association submissions to government and health authorities.

In education, he held appointments on faculty and was on the advisory boards for three chiropractic programs in Australia.

As a leader in the Australasian Council on Chiropractic Education and on the Councils on Chiropractic Education International (CCEI), he played a major role in the development of chiropractic education in Australia and Asia.

For his services to education, in 2007 Dr. Sweaney was honored with the Order of Australia Medal (AM). He also received an honorary doctorate from Murdoch University in Western Australia.

From 1989 to 1990, Dr. Sweaney served as the first Pacific representative on the WFC Council, serving on its Executive Committee - first as secretary-treasurer before becoming president in 1995.

Despite a long period of ill health through diabetes, Dr. Sweaney remained active, attending WFC congresses, where his positivity and good humor served as an inspiration to colleagues throughout the profession.

Committed to the charity [Hands On Health](#), Dr. Sweaney is remembered as a warm and caring advocate for disadvantaged communities, women and Aboriginal health.

Paying tribute to Dr. Sweaney, current WFC president and fellow Australian Dr. Laurie Tassell said, "John Sweaney was truly a giant in the chiropractic profession and his legacy will live on through the lecture established in his name. We mourn his passing and give thanks for his life and his enormous contribution to chiropractic, both in Australia and around the world."

Dr. Sweaney is survived by his wife, Inger Villadsen, also a chiropractor, and sons Rhys and Jens. His son Seth pre-deceased him.

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