

Which Comes First, Chiropractic or the Need?

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When you think of the countries in which the chiropractic profession has grown the most, you immediately think of the United States. With almost 60,000 licensed doctors of chiropractic, the U.S. easily outdistances the next two countries with the most chiropractors: Canada (around 5,300) and Australia (around 2,500).

Those numbers aside, you could ask: "Which country enjoys the greatest use of chiropractic care per capita?" Were such a study conducted, the U.S. might not come out on top. It is very likely, given the differences in health care systems and concentration of DCs, that a greater portion of the population in other countries enjoys chiropractic care on a regular basis. It is quite possible that chiropractors in Switzerland, the United Kingdom, or Hong Kong have made a greater overall impact on their populations even with far fewer chiropractors.

Perhaps another question should be asked: "Where in the world is the greatest unmet demand for chiropractic?" As some parts of the world wrestle with the possibility of an overabundance of DCs, other areas experience severe shortages, to the point that many people who desire chiropractic go without.

Additionally, billions of people (yes, billions) haven't yet experienced chiropractic, don't know much about it, or haven't even heard of it. When chiropractors visit countries where chiropractic is unheard of and show what they do, many of the citizens are very interested and are hungry to learn about chiropractic.

Three years ago, *Dynamic Chiropractic* and NCMIC developed the *Chiropractic Research Review (CRR)* newsletter with the goal is to keep DCs informed of the latest research affecting their practices. Soon afterward, a second newsletter evolved: *To Your Health (TYH)*. *TYH* was a print publication designed to educate chiropractic patients and interested consumers about the benefits of chiropractic and wellness. After a time, *TYH* also went out as an e-mail newsletter. It now has over 60,000 subscribers from more than 140 countries, with over 1,200 new subscribers a week.

What is most interesting is what country has the most *TYH* subscribers after the U.S. No, it's not Canada, and it's not Australia. I won't keep you guessing. It's India! According to the *International Directory* published by the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC), no known DCs are practicing in India. *Dynamic Chiropractic* is mailed to only two doctors in that country. Imagine two DCs serving a country with 1,027,015,000 people! This compares nicely to 60,000 DCs serving a mere 284,682,000 potential patients in the U.S.

The country with the fifth greatest number of *TYH* e-mail consumer subscribers is China. Again, the WFC estimates fewer than 100 DCs there, with the vast majority in Hong Kong. *Dynamic Chiropractic* is mailed to only three in China. That's another golden opportunity for chiropractic: three DCs serving 1,261,832,000 people.

So among the top five countries whose citizens are interested in information about the benefits of chiropractic, you have India and China, with a combined population of 2,288,847,00 (over 37 percent of the world's population), or over eight times the population of the United States. The potential is almost unlimited, but we only have an estimated five DCs to take advantage of it.

In many countries in which chiropractic is better established, the profession will grow partly because an ever-increasing number of doctors of chiropractic create a greater awareness that leads to a great percentage of consumers seeking chiropractic care. In the short term, this can result in an overabundance of DCs.

But for most of the world's population, the response from our profession is negligible. There are fewer than 100 DCs total in China, India, Russia (and the former Soviet republics), and Africa (not counting South Africa).

Chiropractic is going to continue to grow in the U.S., but we must grow globally. If we do not, it will only be a matter of time before other health care professions address the needs of the billions of potential patients. The people of the world are showing an interest in chiropractic, but if they can't get chiropractic, they'll most certainly accept second best.

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