

I Found It Again

HOW ONE DC REDISCOVERED THE "WONDER" OF CHIROPRACTIC IN VENEZUELA

Michael Madden, DC

Don't you get tired of the overweight, chronic low-back patient who complains that the first adjustment didn't totally fix their problem? Or the patient with good results who stops because his "real doctor" told him the "broken-neck" story? Or PI attorneys, insurance adjustors, RVS-CPT codes, and on and on. This isn't the chiropractic full of pure heart and "goose bump" patient response you envisioned in school. It's still the best job in the world -- getting good money for doing something you love, but the reality of running a practice dulls that chiropractic radiance sometimes.

I got it back and then some. I spent a week in the poorest barrio of Maracaibo, Venezuela. A patient of mine became the director of a school system and medical clinic there. I had always bravely talked about doing something noble and adventurous with chiropractic. Well, it was put up or shut up time. The four MDs in the clinic welcomed my arrival because, with only three DCs in the whole country, my presence was more of a curiosity than anything professionally threatening. I wasn't sure where I would fit in with the dramatic needs of these desperately poor people. The options of surgery or medicine that had been given to almost all the people I saw were different than in the United States because surgery and drugs were either not affordable or usually not available. I saw 40 to 60 people a day, and by the second day there was a 7 to 8 hour wait. I could have seen more people, but the people told me every ache or pain they'd ever experienced, just in case I could help them. My Spanish was minimal so the translator also took time. Most people with low back problems had been told they had "kidney problems." The pain of a boy who limped for four years with "colds in his legs" was resolved with two visits. By the third day they were bringing blind, deaf and crippled people to the "American doctor who takes away pain." By the end of the week I'd adjusted the MDs and their families. They even followed me around while seeing patients, to see how I was getting their patients better. For a week, everywhere I went in the neighborhood, people crowded around me, kissing my hands, touching my clothes, giving me presents. Besides manipulation, nobody had ever told them about exercises, postures, pressure points, ergonomic changes, or nutritional advice. Hey people, we've got it!

How come these "ignorant people" realized so dramatically and quickly the wonder of chiropractic? This trip reminded me of our purpose and duty. Share some of your skills with the world, and you'll get more out of it than they will.

I'm presently trying to set up a working relationship with a federally-funded "peace corps" type of organization that places health professionals around the world in needy areas for various periods of time. We're trying to work through the bureaucratic problems, and I hope to announce something professionally positive in the future. Readers are invited to write to me.

*Michael Madden, D.C.
8060 University Ave.
La Mesa, Ca. 92041*

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JANUARY 1990

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