

Back From the Real Thing

Michael Madden, DC

In the January 31, 1990 issue of Dynamic Chiropractic, I wrote an article about an overwhelmingly positive experience treating patients in a poor neighborhood in Maracaibo, Venezuela. Adjusting patients of a variety of ages and complaints all day, through an interpreter in a medical clinic, was the most satisfying thing I had ever done professionally. Because there were no DCs in this city of two million people, I faced no insurance or lawyer paperwork; nothing but happy patients and interested medical doctors. How about that? I didn't even need a Yellow-Page ad.

The return trip, in early June with a medical doctor, was more than I had hoped for. I still saw patients, but spent most of the time meeting hospital directors and MDs, touring facilities, and setting up a program for future chiropractors to maintain a consistent treatment program in the area.

The medical doctors were constantly asking me to come and lecture at their hospitals and clinics. Not once did I run into a hint of prejudice or bias. Almost everyone showed interest in my methods and treatment programs and I adjusted quite a few of them. When some of them received dramatic, symptom reducing results, they were fascinated.

I am now looking for chiropractors who are able to make some time commitments for a period of one week or more.

Right now, the plan is to work in a medical clinic for a couple of days in a barrio, where there is a place to stay at no charge. There are also many hotels in the vicinity, if one prefers to stay there; then spend another couple of days working in a nearby barrio with patients who have Huntington's disease. Look that up in your medical diagnosis book and you will be surprised.

We also have access to a leper colony and hospital in which there is a great deal of physical therapy being done, but not joint manipulation or mobilization. The hospital director was most interested in what we could do in that area.

This is an obscenely poor area, where people live in a manner that you only have seen in documentaries. The medical doctor and I wanted to set up some kind of an ongoing clinic there, just to work on people's general health needs.

We were interviewed by the major newspaper in that city and initially, the reporter had a hard-core attitude, full of cynical reasons why the Americans were coming down here. They finally accepted the fact that we were a self-funded group who were paying our own way, had no axe to grind, and nothing to prove other than that we wanted to help some people. The reporter eventually became very friendly and wrote a very positive article.

The situation demands patience and an unaggressive, philosophical attitude that works well with medical doctors. Purity of heart and motivation, along with some fluency in Spanish would be

dramatically helpful.

You will never regret it, you will never go just one time, and you will never look at the world of chiropractic or yourself the same way again. You will be a part of something bigger than yourself, and that can only be good for you.

I have also been in contact with a group that runs a general health clinic in Haiti. They are most interested in having a chiropractor work in that area. I have not set up a program as of yet, but I am interested in hearing from anybody that would want to do something in that area.

If you are interested in either place, drop me a line with the amount of time you could go and the general time of year -- the more specific the better. Information regarding your language experience would also be appreciated. I look forward to hearing from as many of you as possible.

Readers are invited to write to me:

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Please include your self-addressed stamped envelope. Thank you.

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