

Chiropractic on the Frontier of Russia

On a recent trip to Moscow, I had the pleasure of meeting a true pioneer in chiropractic. In the United States, chiropractic, as we all know, is becoming more mainstream. Chiropractors work hand in hand with medical doctors in hospitals such as Bethesda Naval Hospital and in various interdisciplinary practices. Chiropractors are accepted by insurance panels and are even becoming part of the staff at VA hospitals.

Many of us forget there was a time when chiropractic was illegal and very much unaccepted by the vast majority of the populace. Would you have been a pioneer chiropractor in such times? A very interesting question you might ask yourself.

Dr. Charles Register is such a pioneer in Russia, attempting to establish chiropractic in the country he now considers his home. Dr. Register is originally from Charlotte, N.C.; he is a graduate of Life College and speaks Russian, Arabic, Hebrew and English fluently. His late uncle, the inventor of the Kale technique, motivated him to start a practice in Moscow. According to Dr. Register, he is the only chiropractor (he is aware of) currently practicing in Russia. Imagine being the only chiropractor in the United States - slightly overwhelming, I'd say.

I met with Dr. Register for a few hours in Moscow and got a sense of the difficulties in being such a pioneer. He started his practice in Moscow by bringing only a thermometer from the United States, along with his own two hands. He built his own adjusting tables, repaired light boxes for X-rays and bought office equipment in Russia by haggling at various venues. He found his practice location through a real estate agent. The beginning was rough, but through hard work and determination, he has now been practicing for 11 years in Russia and is doing quite well. He even gets referrals from medical doctors in Moscow.

In some ways, practicing here is surprisingly similar to practicing anywhere else. The majority of the complaints he sees involve low back pain, cervical pain and headaches. Patients have the same concerns to relieve pain, improve health, etc., as they do in America. He explains chiropractic to his patients just as we are trained to do in the states. He has informational brochures he developed in Russian as a part of this education. A slightly more foreign concept for them, as you might imagine. He did advertising early in his practice, as one might do in the states, even getting spots on the local television for a fair price. He is more established at this time, so nowadays, advertising is mostly word of mouth. He has a friendly bilingual staff and carries disability insurance as well.

There are also a few differences, as you might well imagine. Malpractice insurance is not a requirement. There is no insurance coverage for chiropractic, and as a result, Dr. Register has strictly a cash practice. The only other manual manipulators in Russia are medical doctors: neurologists, orthopedists and traumatologists, according to Dr. Register. Russian medical doctors are required to take a brief (560 hours) advanced training course to practice manual therapy. There are approximately 1,500-2,000 MDs trained in Russia in manual medicine - a small amount, considering the population of Russia is approximately 148 million!

The city of Moscow has undergone a major transformation in the past 10 years. Modern style of dress is common, and cell phones and other modern conveniences are more prevalent than I had imagined. Hopefully, a more modern Russia can attract chiropractors from the West to establish practices, following the lead of businesses such as KFC and Subway.

As one might imagine, Dr. Register would like to increase the number of chiropractors in Russia. He says that knowledge of the Russian language would of course need to be acquired. Individuals with a pioneering spirit and a strong passion for chiropractic would be ideal. If you are one of these individuals, drop him an e-mail at spine@redline.ru.

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JANUARY 2005