

## University affiliation: changing public perception to advance chiropractic

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### Introduction

"You don't call a chiropractor a doctor. They don't have the training." This comment, taken from the CCA's *Caplan Report* (1994)<sup>1</sup> on the image of chiropractic, summarizes the misconception that many Canadians currently have of the education of chiropractors. Chiropractors undergo seven years of post-secondary education to achieve the title of "Doctor of Chiropractic," but most Canadians have no concept of the quality of the training involved in educating a chiropractor. Why is their perception so far from the truth? One of the major reasons is that chiropractic education in Canada has, until recently, been conducted outside the government funded, university environment. The advent of the chiropractic programme at l'université du Québec à Trois-Rivières in 1993 began the process of change. It is important that this process continues and all chiropractic education in Canada be conducted within the university environment.

University affiliation is not a new phenomenon, its importance has been recognized by the Canadian chiropractic profession for more than 50 years. Since the establishment of the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College (CMCC) in 1945, affiliation with a Canadian university has been a goal of the profession and the College. It was clearly recognized that affiliation was essential for the development and recognition of the Canadian chiropractic profession. The profession and the College have struggled to achieve this goal through discussions with a variety of universities in different provinces, but for a number of reasons these discussions have been unsuccessful.<sup>2</sup>

However, since the day when, in 1895, Daniel David Palmer made a crucial discovery and performed the first chiropractic adjustment, perseverance has served as a cornerstone of the profession. The example of perseverance he set as he pursued the establishment of chiropractic as an accepted form of health care has been used as a model by the profession with the result that it has achieved tremendous advancements in a relatively short period of time.

The same is true for the goal of university affiliation, which has been persistently pursued by CMCC and is now closer to becoming a reality than ever before.

### The persistent pursuit of university affiliation

The history behind the profession's pursuit of university affiliation has been well-documented in a series of papers authored by Douglas Brown, D.C.<sup>3</sup> Discussions were held regarding university affiliation in the early years of the College, but it was not until the 1960s that CMCC began to concentrate more fully on this goal. One of the earliest contacts was with York University by Earl Homewood, D.C., former President of CMCC.<sup>3</sup> However, York, which had only been accepting students since 1960, was not ready to enter into discussions at such an early point in its history.

CMCC continued its pursuit of affiliation through discussions with a number of Ontario universities, however, none of these efforts was successful.<sup>2</sup> The most common stumbling block in these discussions was the status of government funding for chiropractic education. Any of the universities that were interested in exploring the concept of affiliation needed to be assured that if they were to adopt a chiropractic programme it would be funded in the same manner as their other programmes. On the other hand the government would not agree to consider funding a chiropractic programme until the affiliation was complete. Thus CMCC was in a "Catch 22" situation and it appeared as if there was no way to move forward.

CMCC turned to look at options outside of Ontario and engaged in lengthy discussions with the University of Victoria in British Columbia. The unsuccessful conclusion of these discussions led CMCC to reassess its position and look for innovative options. A strategic evaluation of the current higher education environment revealed that the environment was changing dramatically, tuition levels for university students were rising to unprecedented levels as government funding for all programmes was being cut

significantly. Universities were being forced to become more innovative and were open to new concepts. In addition, societal changes were resulting in a greater interest in alternative forms of health care. Thus it was an appropriate time to consult with the members of CMCC regarding a new model of affiliation, a model where the College would remain financially independent but affiliated with a university so that graduates would receive a university degree. The issue of government funding would be left to be resolved at a later date. The members were surveyed and 89% of respondents supported the new model of affiliation. Thus several universities were approached and asked if they would consider affiliation with CMCC utilizing the proposed model. The response was very positive, and in fact, three universities submitted formal proposals to CMCC based on this scenario. The seemingly impossible barrier of the funding issue had finally been broken.

Each of the proposals from the University of Waterloo, the University of Windsor and York University offered unique opportunities. The submissions were carefully evaluated to determine which most closely met the needs of CMCC according to a predetermined set of criteria. It was decided that York's proposal most closely met the criteria and on May 6, 1995, the CMCC Board of Governors voted unanimously to enter into formal negotiations with York University.

On May 30, 1995 Dr. Jean Moss, President of CMCC, and Dr. Susan Mann, (former) President of York University, signed a Letter of Intent, indicating that York and CMCC would enter into negotiations to develop an affiliation agreement based on the premise that CMCC would remain an independent institution, located on York University's Keele Street campus with an academic affiliation such that graduates of CMCC would receive a York University Doctor of Chiropractic degree. The signing of the Letter of Intent with York University was an historic moment for the College.

Discussions between York University and CMCC have resulted in a draft agreement which was approved in principle by the Board of Governors of CMCC in April 1997. During the summer of 1997 various groups studied ways in which York and CMCC could better cooperate to maintain the highest quality education for CMCC students while providing the opportunity for interaction, in research, in the classroom and at an administrative level between the faculty, students and staff of both institutions.

The final proposal was presented by York to the Academic Policy and Planning Committee, a subcommittee of York University's Senate in November 1997. It is expected to be presented at a full Senate meeting early in 1998 for approval in principle. In order to complete the process the Doctor of Chiropractic degree will have to be legislated by York University's Senate, which will require three readings. It is anticipated that these readings will be completed over the next several months.

### **The model of affiliation**

The affiliation model as proposed is unique, with tremendous benefits for the profession. CMCC will continue to be a financially independent institution, will maintain its current administrative and governance structure, and CMCC graduates will receive a York University Doctor of Chiropractic degree. The College will relocate to York's Keele Street campus near the northern boundary of Toronto and will be known as the "Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College at York University." CMCC faculty will continue to be employees of the College. The Admissions process will continue to be the responsibility of CMCC. In order for York to grant a degree to an individual, he/she must have taken a minimum of five courses at York. Faculty from both institutions have been working together to determine the most appropriate manner in which to meet this requirement. As a result a joint programme is being developed whereby some of the non-clinical courses will serve programmes listed in both York's and CMCC's calendars.

CMCC will continue to provide excellent chiropractic education through a curriculum which ensures that the philosophy, art and science of chiropractic are at the core of the programme. It will also continue to meet all requirements of the Council on Chiropractic Education of Canada (CCEC), which clearly designates the standards for the programme. In addition, CMCC will continue to provide continuing and graduate education opportunities for the profession. It will also continue to be a repository for knowledge through its library, add to this body of knowledge through research and continue to provide many services to the profession and the professional associations as it has done in the past.

In order for the Senate to legislate the D.C. degree it will have to approve CMCC's curriculum. A number of members have expressed concerns that this will result in the

loss of control over the content of the curriculum. There are two factors which should ease these concerns. First, it is common in the case of professional programmes that the curriculum is regulated to a high degree by the profession, since it is the profession which has the responsibility to ensure that new members of the profession are educated to meet the requirements of practice. Second, CMCC is a fully accredited institution through the Council on Chiropractic Education of Canada which prescribes the requirements of a chiropractic programme. York University has acknowledged that CMCC must continue to be a fully accredited institution.

### Why we need university affiliation

Affiliation is required for a number of reasons, not the least of which is to change the false perception that chiropractic education is inferior to that of other health care professionals. This perception has a direct impact on whether people choose to see a chiropractor. The *Caplan Report* clearly indicates that, according to their research, "... chiropractic is an unknown ... Medicine is the mainstream." As a result of this finding, the *Caplan Report* concluded that, "A major issue ... is the public's apparent lack of awareness of the extent of formal education and training which chiropractors must successfully undergo in order to be certified as doctors. In fact, there is a body of confusion surrounding chiropractors' right to use the designation, 'doctor.'"<sup>1</sup>

The research done for the *Caplan Report* demonstrates that the public perceives chiropractors to be less qualified than other health care professionals. In fact, they believe that chiropractors receive only one or two years of post high school education. Once acquainted with the education and expertise of chiropractors, they are positively influenced and indicate that they are more likely to consult a chiropractor. This perception is not limited to the general public, it is also shared by governments. One of the most commonly seen results of this misconception is that chiropractors are frequently denied access to positions of influence in health care administration or policy making because it is perceived that their credentials lack legitimacy.

This perception represents the greatest barrier to the advancement of the profession and it hurts each chiropractor in Canada either directly or indirectly. Chiropractic associations across the country are approaching the issue through public education. It is apparent, how-

ever, that this is not enough and to effectively change the status quo chiropractic education needs to be seen as part of the university system on a par with the education of other health professionals.

The New Zealand Report, completed in 1979, bluntly states that, "Chiropractic can never become accepted ... until its practitioners are educated at institutions which are open to full public scrutiny."<sup>4</sup> The report by Pran Manga on the Effectiveness and Cost Effectiveness of Chiropractic Management of Low Back Pain (1993), the Ontario Council of Health Report in 1973 and the Chiropractic Services Review Committee Report (1994), all commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Health, support this statement and recommend that chiropractic education be placed within the multidisciplinary atmosphere of a university.

Members of the chiropractic profession have expressed the same belief that chiropractic education must be incorporated within a university. Dr. Scott Haldeman, chiropractor and professor at the University of California, states that, "affiliation with York University will have a significant impact on the way that chiropractic is perceived. It will recognize the high level of chiropractic education, and will position us as equal members of the health care team."<sup>5</sup>

"In Canada there is the belief that serious professional education takes place in a university. Therefore to most people, including other health professionals, the fact that chiropractors are educated in a private college is evidence that they have a poor education and are not really accepted in the health care system," according to Mr. David Chapman-Smith, Secretary General of the World Federation of Chiropractic and editor of the *Chiropractic Report*.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Greg Dunn of Manitoba agreed to serve as National Chair of CMCC's capital campaign for university affiliation because he emphatically believes that affiliation is necessary for the chiropractic profession. According to Dr. Dunn, "the reason we have been denied our rightful place at the table where health care policy is made, the reason we have not been able to substantially increase our market share, and the reason we have not been able to gain the respect we deserve as a profession, is the poor public perception of our educational background. This is the crux of what is holding us back as a profession."<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the benefits which will have a direct impact on the profession there are benefits which more



directly impact CMCC and its faculty and students. University affiliation will open up a wider range of educational opportunities for students and it will give impetus to chiropractic research through increased access to external funding opportunities which are only available to university-based programmes.

There are distinct advantages for York University, as well. In 1992 York developed a strategic plan called "Vision 2020" which outlined the future development of the University. In it York clearly outlines its wish to place more emphasis on the reputation of its excellent but small science faculty and to develop a presence in the health sciences through the establishment of a Faculty of Health Sciences which would not be centred on a medical school.<sup>6</sup> CMCC can help York attain this mandate.

In addition, CMCC is a national institution which attracts 600 highly-qualified, mature, professional students from all parts of the country and internationally. CMCC's faculty have a wide range of interesting and innovative research projects which match some of the research interests at York. The addition of an Anatomy Laboratory to York will open some new opportunities for the development of courses and research interests. CMCC also has developed a number of interesting collaborations with other prestigious research institutions such as the Universities of Waterloo, Calgary, Toronto and McMaster University.

### **Advancing chiropractic**

University affiliation has been sought after by our profes-

sion for over 50 years. The advent of the chiropractic programme at l'université du Québec à Trois-Rivières was a major step towards this goal. Now it is time to have all chiropractic programmes in Canada taught within the university environment. Currently, there is interest within the university sector in developing chiropractic programmes. It is important that this be done in a proactive manner where the chiropractic profession has significant input into the development of the programme.

The chiropractic profession has faced many challenges throughout its history but the perseverance and determination historically shown by the members of the profession will stand it in good stead to succeed in meeting these challenges, for the advancement of chiropractic.

### **References**

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