



## Chiropractic in Newfoundland and Labrador

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The province of Newfoundland and Labrador has a combined population of 540,000. There are seventeen chiropractors known to be practicing in the province two of which are practicing in Labrador. There is no government legislation recognizing chiropractic; the last bastion in North America. Ten chiropractors practice in the capital city of St. John's (100,000) on Newfoundland's east coast. On the west coast there are chiropractors in Grand Falls and Corner Brook. Five practitioners also have satellite clinics in small communities that they visit on the average 2 - 3 times per week. These include Placentia, Carbonear, Lewisporte, Gander, Holyrood and Stephenville. The region of the province lacking in accessible chiropractic care is the Burin Peninsula.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Chiropractic Association was set up four years ago through the efforts of Dr. Bruce Pooley, Dr. Don Vance and Dr. Monty Burn. It was fully incorporated in December 1982. Membership is voluntary as no chiropractic legislation exists in the province. There is no medicare coverage of chiropractic in the province and private insurance carriers generally only accept claims from members of the Association. There are at present fourteen practicing full time members, one associate member from Nova Scotia and two lay board members (one of whom is a lawyer and the other who is a prominent local businessman). Admission into the Association requires orientation and testing by the Board of Directors of the Association. This testing is generally performed once yearly depending on the number of applicants to be tested and oriented to Newfoundland.

The Association was set up as a venue to deal with the surmounting problems facing the chiropractic profession as a whole in 1982. The severity of economic and political circumstances in initiating a practice in Newfoundland are numerous. Each practitioner has truly been a pioneer.

The first practitioner arrived in the early 1950's. Dr. MacPherson, known to most as Dr. Mac, had practiced in Ontario for thirty years. He then practiced in Newfoundland until his death in the 1960's. Dr. Scott was the next to arrive on the scene and was forced out of the province through financial difficulties and pressure from the medical community. Dr. Maneta Russell set up in 1968 but after one year of experiencing financial difficulties and problems of acceptance in her native St. John's she then moved to Ontario. Until 1980, there had been only one practicing chiropractor, Dr. Douglas Mallet. Chiropractic was a relative unknown. Because of the geographical isolation, Newfoundland culture has evolved somewhat different than mainstream Canada. For over 350 years society was governed by priests and the medical doctor. Their input into the culture here is massive. Even now, the lieutenant governor, health minister, finance minister and speaker

of the House are all medical doctors. The NMA has strongly discouraged any cooperation between its members and ours. This hard nosed conservative attitude is strongly reflected in its policies.

Public education about chiropractic has been made difficult and many incidents have been reported whereby a general practitioner has told patients he will be turned away again if they seek the help of a chiropractor. The NMA has also requested that its members not refer patients to Chiropractors as they may be held liable for any damages incurred in this unlicensed province.

Diagnostic x-ray at present can only be performed in the hospitals and no private facilities are allowed. Chiropractors have no hospital privileges or access to radiology reports. Patients however, may, upon request pick up x-rays previously taken, usually at a cost of five dollars per copied plate. Many medical doctors who had accepted referrals from chiropractors for doing this essential radiographical testing were given letters of reprimand. On personal contact many medical doctors are very confrontational and at times are brazenly hostile about chiropractic.

Newfoundland chiropractors overall however are a hardy bunch. They have survived economic difficulties, bankruptcies, rumors and bigotry from outside and from within their own profession. Newfoundland chiropractors have been the brunt of many unfounded rumors and have been ostracized by their fellow chiropractors. Eighty percent of presently practicing chiropractors hold a provincial or state licence to practice elsewhere. There are eight educated at CMCC, four at Palmer, one at Western States and one from ADIO. Five members are originally from out West, five from Ontario, two from the Atlantic provinces and one from Quebec. I think that in spite of a very difficult environment in which to practice, it is a remarkable accomplishment in that there have been no recorded instances of malpractice or patient injury. Public safety has been maintained.

One problem we face is that every year 20 - 25% of the chiropractors leave the province and are replaced by new people. This has caused considerable instability within the profession here. We have also had 20% bankruptcy in the last 3 years, and others have left the province before their situation became that critical. We practice in one of the most economically depressed areas in Canada. We are currently undergoing very sensitive negotiation with the provincial government. Discussion has been frank and friendly and with the continual support of the CCA and its members we believe our goal of positive chiropractic legislation can be attained.

Much time, effort and money has been extended by all the members of the NLCA. We need the backing of all the chi-



ropractors across the country through our national association, however, much more public education is necessary in this critical period of chiropractic in Newfoundland and Labrador as we approach legislation. By far most of the population has never heard the word chiropractic. Our largest concern is funding for the necessary public relations, legal fees and lobbying expenses. As we see it, because of the isolation and insulation of the political system and society in Newfoundland, Chiro-

practic is a relative unknown and therefore considerable effort must be put in public education and awareness. As a result of the economic hardships faced by our members this becomes a major challenge. To this end we seek your support.

We feel our goal of establishing Chiropractic into the mainstream health care delivery system can only be attained by a united front and the generous support of the Chiropractic Family.

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