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Sports Medicine Gateway to the Future

A Child's First Check-up

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Sports Medicine

An important gateway to the future



Chantal Petitclerc with Québec leaders Richard Giguère (president, Association des Chiropraticiens du Québec), Richard Valade (president, CCA) and André-Marie Gonthier (president, Ordre des Chiropraticiens du Québec).

Last month, more than 1,000 doctors of chiropractic (DCs) – and chiropractic students – from 38 countries were present for the World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC) 10th biennial congress, hosted by the Canadian Chiropractic Association (CCA), in conjunction with the Association and Ordre des Chiropraticiens du Québec. This celebration of chiropractic began with an address by Canada's 2008 Athlete of the Year, Chantal Petitclerc. Petitclerc is paraplegic, and has been wheelchair-bound since a spinal cord injury at age 13. Despite this, she has broken two world records, while winning five gold medals in track at the Beijing Paralympics in 2008.

At the conference opening ceremonies, Petitclerc spoke of her career, how to adjust and achieve goals, whatever may happen in life, and, of interest to the hundreds in attendance for her talk, the important role of chiropractic in her career as an elite athlete.

Athletes are considered role models and comprise an important sector within the global community. The discipline, vision and endurance required by an athlete – whether amateur or professional, junior or seasoned competitor and regardless of the sport – are recognized, by all, as qualities to which to aspire. Furthermore, from its athletes, the world at large gleams entertainment, as well as inspiration on many levels.

This highly publicized cohort requires specialized health-care individuals, and teams, to help them maintain optimal performance. In recent years, chiropractic has positioned itself as a necessary component of this health care, with DCs emerging as knowledgeable professionals in the field of sports medicine. For this reason, athletes like Petitclerc are proud and happy to attend chiropractic events, and speak to DCs about the importance of chiropractic in the life of an athlete.

Dr. Greg Uchacz, president of the College of Chiropractic Sports Sciences, Canada (CCSS(C)) notes, "The international sports chiropractic community is emerging as a partner in today's international sports medicine environment. We've seen it at the local level and at the international level of athlete care, that more and more athletes seek the care of chiropractors as one of the mainstays of their health-care team. Support from the athletes has been loud and clear over the past decade; chiropractic is an integral ingredient of their health care needs."

The profession's sports specialists also often speak about other inroads made for chiropractic, through its inclusion in sports therapy. As chiropractic attains recognition in the sports medicine environment, understanding of its benefits begins to seep into the public radar. As well, through sport, chiropractic gains recognition and credibility in health care circles in general, as a valuable and efficacious member of health teams.

It is clear, then, that, for chiropractic, involvement in athlete care can be an important gateway for future success.

FICS ON CANADIAN SOIL

Uchacz acted as moderator for the second annual 2009 Fédération Internationale de Chiropratique du Sport (FICS) Assembly and Symposium, which was held in conjunction with the WFC congress, and hosted by the CCSS(C), in Montreal last month. The symposium was attended by more than 150 DCs from all over the globe, and featured many prominent speakers from the international community of sports medicine specialists.

Says Uchacz, "With keynote speakers such as Dr. Jack Taunton, Vancouver Olympic Committee (VANOC) Chief Medical Officer for the 2010 winter games, and Mr. Ron Froehlich, president of the International World Games Association,

the symposium certainly was a testament to sports chiropractic integration into the mainstream health care model."

Taunton and Froehlich told attendees of the approximately 40 DCs who will be serving the athletes, other team officials, media and members of the public in the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games as well as of the 38 DCs who will be serving at the World Games in Kaohsiung, Taiwan this coming July.

Uchacz notes, "It is clear that support for chiropractic care in the sporting environment has filtered 'up' to the organizational level. This has culminated in events such as this year's sports symposium, where other top sports health care professionals were eager to participate."

"It was astounding to experience the sports-focused momentum taking place between all the attendees," continues Uchacz, "and comforting to know that this generation of sports-minded chiropractors is creating the path that many will be able to follow in the future."

Dr. Uchacz, himself, has recently been appointed to the 2010 Canadian Olympic medical team.

DCS AND SPORTS MEDICINE IN CANADA

Chiropractors all over Canada – and their associations – are becoming viewed as an integral element in sports medicine at all levels. These professionals recognize this as a necessary niche from which to springboard chiropractic into recognition as a powerful health-care specialty. From hockey, to golf, to ultimate Frisbee, to dance, the world of sport is becoming more dependent upon chiropractic to maintain athletes at optimal performance levels.

Recently, Halifax, Nova Scotia, chiropractor Dr. Brian Seaman – who has just been presented with the CCA's highest honour, the Medal of Merit – has been appointed as the Chair of Medical Services for the 2011 Canada Winter Games, which will be held in Nova Scotia. Dr. Seaman, is the first chiropractor to serve in this capacity.

Dr. Seaman's appointment involves activities that not only reflect the growing importance of chiropractic to the world of sports medicine, but also demonstrate how DCs will learn much from their involvement in this area. Seaman will sit on a multidisciplinary panel at the upcoming CASM/FIMS Team Physician

course in Vancouver, British Columbia. The panel, which is entitled The Canadian Health Care Team at a Major Games will include topics such as requirements of working at a major games event. The salient point is that the multidisciplinary nature of serving on medical teams, for any sport, requires learning and co-operation on the part of all the professionals involved, in order for the teams to work efficiently and effectively.

Dr. Seaman has also been approached by the organizing committee of the 2009 World Laser Sailing Championships to assist in the setup of its medical team. The regattas (Senior and Masters) will be held in late August and early September 2009, outside of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Seaman, a fellow of the CCSS(C), supports the efforts made by chiropractors, and especially the CCSS(C), to bring the profession into the arena of sports.

"As I look back on what chiropractic, and in particular, the CCSS(C), has accomplished in the field of sports injuries over the past 25 years, it is truly amazing. These accomplishments represent a tremendous amount of time, effort and volunteerism by many very dedicated chiropractors. It is important to realize that these efforts have not only benefited sports chiropractic, but have helped to further heighten the profile of chiropractic right across Canada."

Canada is a nation that loves sports and takes pride in its athletes.

"Athletes are not only great ambassadors for Canada, but serve as outstanding role models for our young people," says Seaman. There are also many athletes who give their time to charity organizations, and volunteer in the community, often doing so behind the scenes. As such, athletes should be viewed as more than just a medal count – they are valuable contributors to the communities around them."

By continuing to evolve into the environment of sports medicine, the profession of chiropractic is participating in making these valuable contributions to the Canadian landscape possible while enhancing the profession's scope of involvement in health care, and bringing chiropractic into the public radar.

Dr. Seaman adds, "At the end of the day, you always hope that your efforts and contributions to the profession have made a difference." •