

“Chiropractic History in Italy”

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As it is customary within history, dates and facts Clear from all sources is the fact that Dr. Marcello Trentin established full-time practice in Italy in the late 1940's. Born in the northeastern part of Italy, Marcello as a boy and young man proved to be inquisitive, bright, and determined. In fact, even though disadvantaged by World War I injuries, he persevered to obtain his D.C. Degree from National College of Chiropractic in 1928. As was common to the time, Dr. Trentin was absorbed into the great "Melting pot" of multi-national immigration into the United States of America. It was not until 1949, that he left his successful Palm Beach, Florida practice to return to Italy. His professional career and fame grew in the city of Padova, where his clinical proficiency and impeccable professional behavior gained the admiration of even would be critics. Dr. Trentin's accomplishments fevered an enterpriser to import chiropractors into a specifically designed medical office in Milan and a medical doctor to send two of his offspring to chiropractic college in America. The names of Hans Greissing and, Giacomo and Caterina Palatini are to be noted as early chiropractors in Italy. By 1969 two French chiropractors, Dr. Gilbert Meyronet and Dr. Marc Perier, were transiently and communally establishing practice in Genova. At the same time chiropractic services could be found in Rome. Over the following decade virtually hundreds of chiropractors were rotated through Italy. Finding a low grade medical resistance, a high grade public acceptance, chiropractic services were employed in new venture physio-therapeutic offices throughout Italy. The forefather and leader of this type of commercially efficient activity was a company known as "Static S.P.A." Offering an effective service, with medical collaboration, in well equipped and attractive facilities, combined with a proficient administrative punch, made the Static operation an example for copy. The standard model was in stark contrast with the traditional picture of chiropractic practice in one room with one table found not only in Italy, but in Europe in general. The Static "clinics" were comprised of; a distinct administration with managing and promotional programs, a medical staff examining first arrivals and cooperating in patient management, trained assistants, departments of radiology and mechanotherapy to support the concept of complete spinal care. The treatment consisted of "active" manipulation performed by chiropractors and "passive" mechanotherapy of the spine and pelvis. Although basic chiropractic biomechanical principles were featured, the word chiropractic was deliberately abandoned in favor of "chiroterapia". The organization felt that the integration of chiropractic view and technique into a medical framework would guarantee an improved and secure service. This "new concept" was legally acceptable and opened the way to National Health Insurance contracts, rendering the service free of charge to all Italians. Once then combined with skillful and successful publicity, Static became a whirlwind of activity. In a short while, Static established clinics in all the major cities of Italy. With a large capital expenditure, counting more than five hundred active personal, receiving more than one thousand new patients a week, and delivering over a million treatments per year, Static became one of the largest operations delivering services performed by chiropractors that the profession has ever known. Quantity became a problem; having heard myself a Static chiropractor complain of underpayment for the large volume of patients treated daily. The situations produced by pseudo-Static enterprises were sometimes even less enchanting in that the chiropractor's "manipulation" was only one of a long list of physiotherapy modalities to which the patient was exposed, leaving the patient unimpressed with the chiropractor's intervention and unaware of a distinct professional existence. At the same time other chiropractors were setting themselves up in independent offices. Most chiropractors followed Ministerial guidelines that chiropractic methodologies could be practiced on the public only under the guarantee and responsibility of an Italian medical doctor. These chiropractors represented a minority of the overall D.C. population, a small fraction of financial investment, and had no or little influence on the political evolution of chiropractic which was controlled by the extra-profession enterprisers. In 1974 the Italian Chiropractors' Association (A.I.C.) was established by a portion of the profession. At the time, this undermined an effort by other chiropractors to find a vehicle to unite all chiropractors in the establishment of an association with, perhaps, the consensus of the business and medical parties who were already active in the Italian world of chiropractic. At the same time, The European Chiropractic Union was also attempting to coordinate the foundation of their future Italian branch. Although the E.C.U. saw fit to accept the computed reality of the new Association, it remains questionable if, in fact, the foundation based on egoistic/nationalistic values, carried out by colleagues who for the most part were neither in full time practice nor had residency in Italy, brought fortune to the Association. Be as it be, the multi-national profession was then divided into association members and non-association chiropractors. Although comprising French, Americans, Belgians, Canadians, Swiss, English, and three Italians, the entire representation was made up of less than twenty practitioners. Under the encouragement of the E.C.U., within a year, a good number of D.C.s inscribed into the A.I.C. and new officers were elected. In October of 1975 the A.I.C. hosted, in collaboration with the National College of Chiropractic, its first post-graduate seminar in Rome. The seminar was conducted by post-graduate faculty members from the National College, addressed by the President of the E.C.U. and the United States Attaché of Science & Technology, and the group's presence was acknowledged by Pope Paul VI and the Mayor of Rome. So all seemed to be on a road to success! It should also be noted on this happy note, that a Pro-Chiropractic Association had already been established in 1973, one year prior to the foundation of the A.I.C. Under the capable and willing leadership of Mr. Balbassari and Mr. Cambriani, the Association immediately launched a bright existence. Several hundred inscriptions and the regular publication of the Newsletter "Vivere Bene" rapidly diffused the message of chiropractic and established a series of national and international contacts. The '70s proved to be a very active period. The entire chain of Static clinics was established and a good number pseudo-Static operations were seeded. Chiropractors of a truly independent and non supported nature

were, however, few and far between. As the decade advanced, the Association showed signs of progress even though understanding and aims were difficult to obtain amongst members. This was probably do, in part, to the multinational make up of the membership. Then, it must be remembered that for the most part the Association was made up of recent graduates who had uncertain ideas to remain in Italy for their lifetime. These colleagues filled fluctuating positions when they appeared or in accordance to self convenience. Most of them being imported, the typical scenario was to accept a "job-position" in Italy for experience and to make enough money to go into practice elsewhere, not having any particular concern for the professional outcome of Italy. In addition, there was a portion of the chiropractic community which was a little too lively in their extraprofessional activities. Some of these made fame for themselves by manners and actions which did not behoove themselves, nor the profession. Additional note must be made of the following:- In 1972 a fiscal law was passed which exempted the chiropractor's treatment from sales tax (IVA/VAT), if said treatment was performed within specialist medical environment. - In 1980 a commission was formed by the Health Ministry to investigate chiropractic. Their inquest took them as far as the United States and reported their opinion as to: a definition and use of chiropractic treatment, requisites of D.C. work permits, and a description of the medical structures in which chiropractors could work; it also concluded that: chiropractic was useful and effective, it was a service in escalating demand, statistical data concerning the subject was positive, chiropractic should be included in the medical professions, and that educational facilities and legislation should be provided. - In 1982 the Health Minister, in a directive letter, makes direct reference to D.C.s operating within the National Health Insurance Program, and not withstanding the objection of certain Italian Regions and the Italian Society of Physical and Rehabilitative Medicine, gave his consensus to the practice of chiropractic in public structures, citing the commission's findings. - In 1984 another Ministerial letter establishes indications and contro-indications to chiropractic treatment. Probably more important than the above are the administrative/bureaucratic skirmishes and court conflicts in which chiropractors found themselves. The contents and merit of these cases are far too complex to be described in the contents of this historical resume, but the core of these disputes were almost always based on the non-recognition of the chiropractic degree and the practice of medicine without a license. One of these cases went so far as the Constitutional Court for decision. All and all, we can be thankful to the colleagues who fought these difficult and contorted battles managing, in the end, to preserve our professional activity. In do respect for the agony generated by these circumstances and the determination which in all cases prevailed, these individuals hold a special and honorable place in the history of chiropractic in Italy. In 1982 that which was named "The World Chiropractic Conference" was held in Venice. The event was organized by Static s.p.a., The Palmer College of Chiropractic and The International Chiropractor's Association, sponsored by The Foundation for the Advancement of Chiropractic Tenets, Cleveland and Life Colleges of Chiropractic, and at the last moment by The Italian Chiropractor's Association. The symposium carried a wide array of medical and chiropractic lecturers and published the papers in a book. The basic theme was to validate the chiropractic approach and encourage inter-professional collaboration. The European Chiropractor's Union Convention was hosted in Rome in 1979 and in Rapallo, on the Italian Riviera, in 1988. By this time the A.I.C. was conducting Post-graduate educational courses on a regular basis, often times in collaboration with North American college faculty. The A.I.C. stumbled on internal affairs and disputes, including new professional divisions. Not all of the few existent Italian D.C.s adhered to the Association and distance increased between Static and many non-Static chiropractors. From still another area, desertion led to the brief existence of a second chiropractic association. Neither can it go unmentioned, the fame of certain chiropractors which propagated chiropractic, but not always in terms acceptable to all. Ethics, self-regulation, and scope of Practice were common topics for association debate. Intra-A.I.C power plays led to the destruction of the Pro-Chiropractic Association. Great effort was put into an envisioned college of chiropractic in Italy. Although certain elements of the above have evolved and not remained confined in history, I shall not attempt to describe contemporary chiropractic in Italy. It is fair to add however, that in more recent years the profession is maturing and its destiny is gradually falling within the hands of its practitioners. Chiropractors are more involved in the politics and economics of the profession, and chiropractic in Italy is no longer a foreign affair. Not only shall one consider the increment of Italian D.C.s, but also a good number of non Italian permanent resident chiropractors who by choice and/or through the bond of marriage have made Italy their home. Together they form a good portion of the profession and offer stability, independent investment, and concern for the long term outcome in Italy. The A.I.C. is on a more even keel than that which had been seen in the past. Many are the colleagues, who coordinate labor in behalf of chiropractic. This advancement may be attributed to the past A.I.C. President, Daniele Bertamini, who through his example of dedication and perseverance has gained the admiration of all those whom with whom he has associated. Either through the inspiration provided by Dr. Bertamini, or found elsewhere, today the true spirit of chiropractic is found within the Association.

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