



Chiropractic

The Early Years... D.D. Palmer

The first chiropractic adjustment was performed in Davenport, Iowa in the year 1895 by a man named Daniel David Palmer. During his lifetime, Palmer would be a schoolteacher, a farmer -- developing a new variety of raspberry, which he called "Sweet Home" -- a grocer and eventually practicing as a "Magnetic Healer" in Davenport for a number of years prior to founding chiropractic.

Contrary to what its name suggests, magnetic healing had nothing to do with magnets. Rather it was a cross between massage and meridian therapies--which is based upon the concepts of acupuncture and Chinese medicine. Magnetic healing rose up as an alternative to mainstream medicine at the end of the civil war. It was common for medical doctors to use blood letting as a method for curing disease.

Palmer was interested in finding the true cause(s) of disease. He wanted to know why two people who lived in the same house, drank the same water, breathed the same air and often had the same parents, could have two dramatically different constitutions, one being healthy and free of disease and the other sickly. Palmer felt that there must be something other than environmental factors influencing an individual's health. His theory was that this internal factor was the function of the nervous system. On September 18, 1895 D.D. Palmer would have the chance to prove his theory.

"Harvey Lillard a janitor in the Ryan Block, where I had my office, had been so deaf for 17 years that he could not hear the racket of a wagon on the street or the ticking of a watch. I made inquiry as to the cause of his deafness and was informed that when he was exerting himself in a cramped, stooping position, he felt something give way in his back and immediately became deaf. An examination showed a vertebra racked from its normal position. I reasoned that if that vertebra was replaced, the man's hearing should be restored. With this object in view, a half-hour's talk persuaded Mr. Lillard to allow me to replace it. I racked it into position by using the spinous process as a lever and soon the man could hear as before. There was nothing "accidental" about this, as it was accomplished with an object in view, and the result expected was obtained.

Palmer felt that Lillard's hearing loss was due to a blockage of the spinal nerves that control the inner ear. This nerve blockage, in Palmer's estimation, was caused by an irritation of the spinal nerves by misaligned vertebrae. When Palmer corrected the misalignment by pushing the vertebrae back into place, the nerve pathways were reopened and thus Lillard's hearing was restored. Today we know that the mechanism involved with spinal misalignment's (The Vertebral Subluxation) is much more complicated than originally postulated by Palmer. However, Palmer's basic concept of nervous system interference adversely effecting health has held true over the last 105 years. D.D. Palmer's close friend, the Reverend Samuel H. Weed, first coined the term "chiropractic".

The basic outline and data is derived from a text by Walter Wardwell, PhD., entitled, "Chiropractic: History and Evolution of a New Profession" Published by Mosby, 1993.

The term chiropractic was taken from the two Greek words:

Cheir (Chiro), Meaning "Hand"

Praxis (Practic), Meaning "Practice"

Thus chiropractic means "Done by Hand"



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