Original article

The Fountain Head Chiropractic Hospital: the dream that almost came true

Barclay W. Bakkum DC, PhD^{a,*}, Delores Bakkum Nolan^b

^a Associate Professor, Illinois College of Optometry, Chicago, IL 60616

^b Vice President, Nolan X-Ray Filters, Wanganui, New Zealand

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Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this article is to relate information about the life of Dr William Ivens and describe the worldwide effort led by him to establish a chiropractic hospital at the Palmer School of Chiropractic.

Discussion: Dr William Ivens, a colorful politician and chiropractor from Winnipeg, Canada, was the driving force behind the idea of establishing a chiropractic hospital at the Palmer School of Chiropractic in Davenport, IA, during the late 1930s. With the blessings of Dr BJ Palmer, president of the Palmer School of Chiropractic, Dr Ivens led an aggressive, worldwide campaign to raise the funds necessary to establish what was to be called the Fountain Head Chiropractic Hospital. During the tumultuous years of 1937–1942, this campaign successfully raised the target sum of \$50000, thought necessary to create the hospital, but the idea never became a reality. These funds were eventually used to purchase the Clear View Sanitarium, a chiropractic psychiatric facility, in Davenport, IA, in 1952.

Conclusion: Dr William Ivens stands as a prime example of a relatively small, but dedicated, number of chiropractors during the mid-20th century who not only believed in, but toiled for, the idea of chiropractic care being given in an in-patient setting.

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Introduction

With these words in 1937, there began a worldwide appeal to establish a chiropractic hospital at the Palmer School of Chiropractic (PSC):

“Does not the reader agree with me that the next great step forward ought to be the establishment at the PSC of a wonderful Chiropractic Hospital, to which patients of all classes, from every nation, could come, and in which they would be nursed back to health under competent Chiropractic services?”¹

The importance of complete chiropractic care, including hospitalization, was understood from the very beginning of the chiropractic profession by its founder, Dr Daniel David Palmer. There were in-patient facilities at the PSC from its inception in

* Corresponding author. Illinois College of Optometry, 3241 South Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60616. Tel.: +1 312 949 7267; fax: +1 312 949 7387.

E-mail address: bbakkum@ico.edu (B. W. Bakkum).

the late 1890s to the mid-1920s.² The idea of a chiropractic hospital at the PSC was reawakened in the mid-1930s. Interestingly, the principal force behind this movement was not Dr Bartlett Joshua Palmer, the charismatic son of DD Palmer and president of the PSC, but Dr William Ivens of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. The purpose of this article is to relate information about the life of Dr Ivens and describe the effort led by him to fulfill his “dream of a Chiropractic Hospital equipped and established as the voluntary goodwill contribution of chiropractors and patients the world over to The PSC The Fountain Head of Chiropractic.”³

William Ivens, MA, BD, DC

William “Bill” Ivens (Fig 1) was born in Barford, Warwickshire, England, in 1878.⁴ He emigrated to Manitoba, Canada, in 1896. After graduating from the University of Manitoba, he became a Methodist minister at the McDougal Church in Winnipeg. Rev Ivens was a well-known social activist and broke with

Fig 1. William “Bill” Ivens, MA, BD, DC circa 1939 (photograph from authors’ private collection).

Fig 2. Drs William Ivens and BJ Palmer, undated (photograph from authors’ private collection).

the church over his pacifism during World War I. He was ultimately expelled from the Methodist Church for his political views and went on to found the Labour Church. His sermons centered on politics, philosophy, and religion. In 1918, Rev Ivens became editor of the *Western Daily News*, a labor newspaper. He was arrested and found guilty of seditious conspiracy in 1920 for activities related to his staunch support of the local labor movement during the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. Ironically, and apparently legally, while serving a 1-year prison sentence, William Ivens ran for and was elected to the Manitoba legislature as a member of the Dominion Labour Party. He was reelected for 2 additional terms in 1922 and 1927.

During this time, William Ivens also completed further studies and became a 1926 graduate of the Manitoba School of Chiropractic.⁵ As Dr William Ivens, he conducted a successful chiropractic practice out of his home in Winnipeg until the mid-1950s.

Dr Ivens lost his seat in the Manitoba Legislature in the 1936 elections and never held public office again.⁵

He tried to remain active in politics, but his influence waned as a younger generation came into power.⁴ It is not certain when Dr Ivens became acquainted with Dr BJ Palmer; but by the mid-1930s, the two carried on an extensive correspondence and even friendship that lasted over the next quarter century⁶⁻¹⁰ (Fig 2). It was during this time that he came upon the idea of establishing a hospital at the PSC.

Palmer Hospital: the idea

The notion of creating a chiropractic hospital at the PSC appears to have originated with Dr Ivens around 1932, but BJ rejected this suggestion at that time.¹ Undaunted, Ivens continued to work behind the scenes. By 1935, he had formulated a detailed plan to make what he called the Fountain Head Chiropractic Hospital. This was to be constructed in conjunction with the BJ Palmer Clinic, the already existing outpatient facility at the PSC.¹¹

Finally, in 1937, Dr BJ Palmer...

"...agreed to the suggestion provided he personally be allowed to stand aside, an interested, but inactive, onlooker. Since the proposed hospital would be set up as part of the institution which he personally owns, his proviso is readily understood and appreciated. He has now agreed to set aside the whole second floor of his huge Clinic building just as soon as the proposal sufficiently matures."³

Throughout the ensuing campaign to create the hospital, BJ Palmer, who understood the political climate of the time, continued to support the idea, but behind the scenes. In a letter to Dr Ivens dated July 1, 1940, he wrote:

"I am as vitally interested in the necessity for the hospital as I ever was. It IS needed and badly. But, it does seem to be a case of 'Be damned if you do, and be damned if you don't.' If I was outright for it then I was 'after more money.' If I didn't say anything and let you folks take the initiative and go ahead, with my silent acquiescence, then B. J. does not really want the hospital, and so on. What to do?"¹²

Therefore, it appears that Dr Ivens became the leader of the movement to build the hospital with Dr Palmer's blessings and full support.

After architectural consultation, it was thought that the space set aside for the hospital could be made into 35 to 40 wards with from 1 to many beds each.³

"When completed the hospital will be composed of four distinct types of wards and service, as follows:

1. Wards for general Chiropractic hospitalization.

2. Obstetrical wards where Chiropractic service will prevail.
3. Traumatic wards, where patients accidentally injured will no longer be deprived of Chiropractic service.
4. Service in a separate institution where mental cases can get the finest type of Chiropractic Health Service."¹¹

There were blueprints that were eventually rendered in 1941, but these appear to have been lost.¹³ The average cost for each ward was approximately \$1000, and it was thought that another \$20000 would be needed to provide equipment. Therefore, a sum of \$50000 would be needed to initiate this project; and this became the goal of an aggressive, worldwide fundraising project led by Dr Ivens.

FountainHead Chiropractic Hospital: the campaign

Dr Ivens made his dream known to the world in an article entitled "A Wonderful Half Century," which appeared in the December 1937 issue of *The Chiropractor*. *The Chiropractor* was a monthly publication of the PSC that, according to its title page, was "A National Magazine Devoted to the Promotion and Perpetuation of Straight Chiropractic."¹ This magazine became the primary method that Ivens used to communicate information about the hospital campaign to the profession, at least that portion of the profession that seemed to be aligned with the Palmer style of chiropractic. From December 1937 through September 1942, Dr Ivens wrote almost monthly articles in *The Chiropractor*. Throughout this nearly 5-year period, only 5 issues of *The Chiropractor* did not have an article written by Dr Ivens. In most of these articles, he promoted the campaign to raise funds for the hospital and reported the status of the campaign.

Dr Ivens was very idealistic about his idea. After presenting the notion of creating a chiropractic hospital at the PSC, his "thought was that chiropractors everywhere spontaneously and voluntarily unite their forces to create and equip the hospital...."¹¹ He saw this project as a profession-wide undertaking. In an article in the March 1938 issue of *The Chiropractor* entitled "Chiropractic Hospital at the 'PSC' a Practical Proposal—A Dream that Must Come True," Dr Ivens appealed to "Chiropractors and Patients the world over" that "(n)ow is the time for us all to make a gesture that will fittingly honor our profession."³ Not only did he think that there would

The Fountain Head Chiropractic Hospital Organization Rapidly Taking Shape

By William Ivens, M.A., B.D., D.C.

Fig 3. Cover of pamphlet that accompanied the announcement of the Fountain Head Chiropractic Hospital Organization at the 1938 PSC Lyceum (from authors' private collection).

be worldwide support for the PSC hospital, but that from it would "be created a world-wide Chiropractic Hospital Consciousness."¹¹ In this vein, in 1939, he received a letter from a Dr Peter Boike, who at the time was apparently rendering chiropractic services to Mahatma Gandhi in India, which stated:

"Now in regards to the hospital plan I am most heartily in favor of the plan. It is 20 years too late in its

making. If B.J. and the chiropractic profession had real idealism and had the Science at heart as much as they claim, instead of fighting and back-biting each other in all the many years they could have established something that the whole world would have been proud of. However it isn't to [sic] late yet."¹⁴

On the other hand, Dr Ivens was a practical person and a shrewd businessman. At the PSC Lyceum in August 1938, he unveiled The Fountain Head Chiropractic Hospital Organization¹¹ (Fig 3). This organization had a World Chiropractic Committee that was composed of local committees in each state, Canadian province, and 11 foreign countries, one of which was Alaska, that were to work out their own methods of raising the necessary contributions. It also created the Fountain Head Chiropractic Hospital Fund Advisory Board that would be in charge of the funds and would work in close cooperation with the PSC. Dr Ivens was the chairman of the Advisory Board; however, it is interesting to note that Dr Palmer was not an official part of the organization at all. The Advisory Board's headquarters offices were in Davenport, IA (location of the PSC). As funds were received, they were "placed with two reliable chartered banks, and auditors appointed to assure that all monies were accurately accounted for," and "the headquarters office can expend no funds until so instructed by the executive officers, and their joint signatures appended to checks issued."¹¹

Besides direct appeals, several other fund-raising techniques were used. These included letter writing campaigns,^{9,15,16} at least one appeal over WOC, the radio station in Davenport, IA, owned by BJ Palmer,¹⁵ and explanatory literature available to chiropractors to put in their offices in order to generate donations from patients.¹¹

A novel notion was the use of money (dime) banks in the shape of the clinic building at the PSC (Fig 4). It should be noted that the banks were modeled on a building with 3 stories, but the BJ Palmer Clinic building actually had only 2 stories. This seems to be a reflection of the unbridled optimism that Dr Ivens had for the project. Near the beginning of the campaign, he wrote that "(o)nce this institution is established I forsee a rapid expansion. It may well be that shortly another floor will have to be added to find accommodation for the many patients who may throng from all parts of the world."³

Another innovative idea was that of ward sponsorship. It was suggested that donations of \$1000 be raised by individuals, states, companies, and organizations to sponsor a hospital ward.¹¹ A Children's Ward was suggested in a letter from Dr Ivens to Dr Palmer.¹⁷ The

Fig 4. Dime bank used as part of the campaign to raise funds for the Fountain Head Chiropractic Hospital (photograph from authors' private collection).

most popular ward was the Mabel Palmer Ward. Dr Mabel Palmer, BJ's wife, was well known in the chiropractic profession and especially at the PSC where she taught anatomy, wrote an anatomical textbook, and was a popular figure on campus. This ward was oversold, as a letter-writing campaign raised \$2000 from 200 lady chiropractors and chiropractic wives in just 2 months.¹⁶

The first progress report of how the campaign was going was in a May 1939 article in *The Chiropractor*, which stated that the Chiropractic Hospital Fund had \$10296.16 cash on hand plus \$13934.57 in pledges, for a total of \$24229.73.¹⁸ This represented 48% of the goal of \$50000. In March 1940, cash on hand (\$26991.73) and pledges (\$16002.00) had reached \$42993.73.¹⁹ By August that same year, Ivens reported a total of \$45122.72 (cash, \$31456.01; pledges, \$13666.71).²⁰ In September 1940, it was triumphantly announced in *The Chiropractor* article entitled "Chiropractic Hospital Fund Goes Over the Top" that the campaign had a total of \$50349.00.²¹ Unfortunately, only \$34769.03 was cash on hand. There were \$15589.87 in pledges that were still outstanding.

Throughout 1941 and most of 1942, Dr Ivens' articles in *The Chiropractor* had a different feel. These articles were mostly about social or political issues. Only a few of them mentioned the hospital campaign in passing. The exception was the November 1941 article where the Bakkum Chiropractic Hospital in Waukon, IA,²² was touted as a prime example of chiropractic hospitalization.¹³ The article even included pictures. It was also noted that the hospital campaign had \$46552.92 on hand. The only other report on the hospital campaign during this period came in April 1942.²³ Ivens' article noted that the hospital campaign lacked only \$1239.96 from reaching its stated goal of \$50000.

Dr Ivens and Drs Roy and Jessie Bakkum, who owned the Bakkum Chiropractic Hospital, were good friends. Dr Roy was the chairman of the Iowa committee in the Fountain Head organization.¹¹ In 1939, Drs Bakkum visited Dr Ivens in Winnipeg, along with other interested parties from Canada, to meet about the hospital.²⁴⁻²⁷ This meeting happened to occur when the King and Queen of England were

Fig 5. Clock and accompanying statues from William Ivens that were presented to BJ Palmer by Roy and Jessie Bakkum for the use in the Fountain Head Chiropractic Hospital displayed on the main fireplace mantle in BJ Palmer's mansion in Davenport, IA (photograph from authors' private collection).

in Winnipeg; and because Drs Ivens still had some political connections, he and Jessie attended a speech given by the King. The Drs Bakkum brought back a clock with 2 accompanying statues from Dr Ivens that was presented to Dr Palmer for placement in the hospital. The clock and statues are still on display on the mantle in the BJ Palmer mansion in Davenport, IA (Fig 5). Also from 1940 to 1942, Milton Ivens, MD, who was the son of William Ivens, worked as the resident medical physician and lived at the Bakkum Chiropractic Hospital.²²

In September 1942, Dr Ivens wrote what was to be his last article in *The Chiropractor* for nearly a decade.²⁸ Entitled "War Makes Chiropractic Hospital Imperative," it represented the official announcement that the hospital campaign was ceasing. The final balance sheet showed \$51061.67 cash on hand and \$10510.54 in outstanding pledges, for a grand total of \$61572.21. A roll call of states was included that gave the totals of funds from each state. Not too surprisingly, Iowa had the biggest total with pledges of \$12681.35, of which \$12091.55 had been received as cash. Therefore, the hospital campaign did reach its stated goal of raising \$50000; but unfortunately, the Fountain Head Chiropractic Hospital was never realized.

Outcomes

Even though \$50000 was the goal for the initial fund-raising campaign, this amount was seen as only a beginning. Hospitals are expensive propositions, and the people involved with this campaign knew this. In a 1940 letter from Dr Mabel Palmer to Dr Ivens, she wrote:

"In building any kind of structure, it always runs beyond the first amount that is laid down, and in building a hospital and having it in keeping with B.J.'s Clinic, will run in excess of \$50,000.... I am facing this hospital in cold figures, and I know that after the \$50,000 is raised it will take more to complete it; and I know that neither B.J. nor I will plunge ourselves into such indebtedness as we have in the past—much as I see that the hospital is needed badly.... There is not anything I would like to see in these few years that we have ahead of us, to complete the picture here at the Fountain Head, more than to have a beautiful hospital."²⁹

The timing of the notion of creating a hospital at the PSC was not optimal given the larger world picture. With the fund-raising campaign starting during the depths of the Great Depression, donations were

relatively difficult to elicit from people who were trying to make financial ends meet. Furthermore, the goal of raising the \$50,000 was realized during the early portion of America's involvement in World War II. With the uncertainty of the times, it is not surprising that there was no rush to start construction.

With the official end of the hospital campaign in September 1942, Dr Ivens appears to have started playing a smaller role in the life of the PSC. It is known that he worked at collecting pledges for the hospital as late as 1948.³⁰ Even so, his hope for a hospital at the PSC was still alive. In 1948, he wrote to Dr Palmer:

"The future holds great possibility and will make heavy demands along chiropractic hospitalization lines. May the PSC play its full part when the time comes."¹⁰

BJ had not given up on the idea either. After Dr Mabel Palmer died in 1949, Dr BJ Palmer wrote a general letter of appreciation to his colleagues and friends. He concludes the letter:

"Six suggestions have been received re a Memorial to Mabel. What could be more appropriate than THE MABEL PALMER MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, a fund now existing for that purpose?"³¹

The funds raised for the hospital were "placed in government bonds"³² and held in Davenport until 1951. At this point, an opportunity arose for the money to be used toward fulfilling at least part of Dr Ivens' original dream. The Clear View Sanitarium, a chiropractic mental hospital, had been founded in Davenport in 1926.³³ When its owners retired in 1951, they wished "to insure the continuation of the sanitarium as a Chiropractic institution, converted this desire into reality by offering the institution to the Fountain Head Hospital Committee."³³ The board accepted the offer, and "(o)n October 13th, the purchasing committee of the Fountain Head Hospital Fund deeded Clear View Sanitarium to the Palmer School of Chiropractic."³³ This represented a de facto end for the Fountain Head Hospital becoming a reality, since the Clear View Sanitarium continued to function under its original name until it was closed in 1961.³³ This mental health facility was the only part of the original plan that was actually achieved.

By this time, Dr Ivens was no longer chairman of nor even sat on the Fountain Head Chiropractic Hospital Fund Advisory Board. It is not clear why this change occurred. At the time of the purchase of Clear View, the Board was chaired by Tena S Murphy, DC.

Dr Murphy had been an important part of the hospital project from the very beginning. She was the secretary of the Fountain Head Chiropractic Hospital Fund Advisory Board when it was created in 1938¹¹ and had also been involved in the WOC radio campaign.⁹

It appears that Dr Murphy had become the chair of the board shortly before the purchase of Clear View and that Dr Ivens was glad at this turn of events. In a letter to Drs Roy and Jessie Bakkum dated September 5, 1951, Dr Ivens stated that he had received a letter from Dr Murphy the day before in which she informed him that there had been an election of officers for the committee and that she "is now the new President of the group. That is most fitting isn't it?"³⁴

Even though Dr Ivens was not on the Board, Dr Palmer still valued Dr Ivens' opinion and asked for it relative to the purchase of Clear View. Dr Ivens related to the Drs Bakkum that "(h)e [Dr Palmer] phoned me three times and wired me twice, so my advice was sought thereon."³⁴

In this same letter, Dr Ivens seemed pleased that the money for his vision was used as it was, although he still had hoped that this was only a beginning:

"Yes, we are all glad that at long last the money we so laboriously raised a decade ago has now been invested in 'Clearview Sanatorium' [*sic*]. The property is good; the location ideal; and my hope is that presently the institution can be expanded into a general hospital as well as a mental one."³⁴

Dr Palmer had also not given up on the idea of a true hospital at the PSC. With the coming acquisition of the Clear View Sanitarium in 1951,

"Dr. B.J. Palmer, president of The Palmer School, who announced the anticipated change at the annual Lyceum in August, indicated that Clear View would stand as the first unit in a hospital plan to include other buildings and facilities as soon as funds and available material permitted."³³

After the Fountain Head Hospital Fund had been spent to acquire Clear View, Dr Ivens appears to have faded further out of the picture. At the time of the purchase of Clear View, he sent an airmail letter to Dr Palmer asking whether or not he and Ralph Evans (editor of *The Chiropractor*) wanted him to write an article for that publication on how the hospital funds were used for that purpose.³⁴ Apparently, he was not taken up on the offer because he had only 2 more articles that appeared in *The Chiropractor*, both in 1952 and both concerning social issues: the Cold War³⁵ and world food supplies.³⁶

Although he was not an active part of events at the PSC any more, Dr Ivens still did not want to be forgotten. In a letter to Drs Roy and Jessie Bakkum sent when they were preparing to go to the PSC Lyceum in 1954, Dr Ivens wrote:

“If you see Tena Murphy please say a hearty ‘Hello’ for me. She holds a warm place in my esteem. Also, if you chat with B.J. tell him that often he is in my thoughts, and that I am happy that the hospital is now part of the PSC set up. That was a fortunate purchase for sure.”³⁷

Because of failing health, Dr Ivens spent his last years with his son, Milton Ivens, in California. He died in Chula Vista, CA, in 1958, just before his 80th birthday.⁴

Conclusion

Dr William Ivens had a dream that chiropractic hospitals would be a worldwide phenomenon and that the flagship institution would be the Fountain Head Chiropractic Hospital at the PSC in Davenport, IA. During some of the most challenging years of the 20th century, he worked tirelessly to try to make this dream come true. Even after the campaign to raise funds for the hospital did not fulfill this dream in the way he envisioned, Dr Ivens did not let go of the idea. He held on, until the end of his days, to the belief that the world needs chiropractic care in a hospital setting. Because of the political climate during Dr Ivens’ era, the only way for chiropractic in-patient care to become a reality was for the chiropractic profession to build its own facilities. This did not prove to be cost effective. More recently, through the diligent work of other leaders in the chiropractic profession, a few doctors of chiropractic have gained the necessary privileges to offer their services in conventional in-patient facilities, eg Veterans’ Administration hospitals. It may well be that Dr Ivens’ notion of chiropractic care being available to hospitalized patients may still become a reality, although not in the way he envisioned, as separate facilities, but rather by doctors of chiropractic being added to the health care teams managing patients in mainstream hospitals.

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