ELSEVIER

The John A. Sweaney Lecture

The John A. Sweaney Lecture: origins

David Chapman-Smith LLB (Hons)*

Secretary-General, World Federation of Chiropractic, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Received 4 August 2013; received in revised form 21 August 2013; accepted 10 September 2013

Key indexing terms:

Chiropractic:

Congresses as topic

Abstract The following is a description of the origins of *The John A. Sweaney Lecture*, which is given at each of the World Federation of Chiropractic's biannual assemblies.

© 2013 National University of Health Sciences.

Introduction

The World Federation of Chiropractic (WFC) was established in Sydney, Australia, on October 2, 1988.¹ According to the bylaws, the objects of the WFC are “the establishment and operation of a chiropractic professional association for the purposes of:

1. uniting members of the chiropractic profession and protecting the character and status of the profession, promoting ethical practice, and settling questions of professional usage and courtesy among members of the profession;
2. encouraging improved standards of chiropractic education and practice in order to provide the highest quality of service to the community;
3. cooperating with appropriate national or international organizations to provide information, counsel, and assistance in the fields of chiropractic and world health;

4. encouraging research with respect to chiropractic, in part through regular international congresses of chiropractic;
5. assisting in developing an informed public opinion among all peoples with respect to chiropractic.”²

Every 2 years, the WFC meets to hold an international congress to help reach these objectives. At the June 2006 meeting in Johannesburg, the WFC Council honored WFC Past-President Dr John Sweaney of Australia by establishing a keynote address at all future biennial Assemblies of Members titled *The John A. Sweaney Lecture*. It was decided that the first keynote address should be delivered at the 2007 biennial Assembly of Members of the WFC, which was attended by leaders and delegates from the WFC's 90 national chiropractic association members. The lecture was created in recognition of outstanding services to the profession by Dr John Sweaney of Newcastle, Australia, a WFC Past President, and of his character and inspiring bravery in confronting ill health from diabetes and its complications. Dr Sweaney's fine character, his bravery, and dignity were noted in downplaying and combating the growing impact of the diabetes he contracted at the time of a sports injury while at university.

* Corresponding author. 1246 Yonge Street, Suite 203 Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4T 1W5. Tel.: +1 (416) 484 9978.

E-mail address: dchapman-smith@wfc.org.

The following year, the processes for the lecture were institutionalized. At the June 2008 meeting in Seoul, Korea, the WFC Council approved the following policies for this honored speech:

1. “The John A. Sweaney Lecture”. The theme and subject matter of each lecture shall be chosen by the speaker. The lecture shall address an issue or issues of significance to the profession throughout the world, and the speaker is encouraged to give a lecture with a challenging and/or inspiring message.
2. Choice of Speaker. The speaker shall be chosen by the Executive after solicitation of recommendations from the Council.
3. Financial Arrangements. The WFC shall subsidize the expenses incurred by each of Dr Sweaney and the speaker in attending the Assembly for delivery of the lecture, in such amounts as are reasonable having regard to the WFC’s financial situation at the time.

Reasons why Dr John Sweaney was selected by the WFC for this special honor

His lifetime contribution to the profession has been outstanding. Upon graduation with honors from the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College in 1968, Dr Sweaney returned to his native Australia where he established a practice and assumed leadership positions in state and national professional associations, and later in educational and regulatory bodies.

He served as President of the Chiropractors’ Association of Australia, then known as the *Australian Chiropractors’ Association*, from 1979 to 1981 and then as Executive Director for 15 years from 1985 to 1999. During this time, he was the principal author of many association submissions to government and health care authorities. In the field of education, he held appointments to faculty and on advisory bodies for the 3 established schools of chiropractic in Australia. As a leader in the Australasian Council on Chiropractic Education and Council on Chiropractic Education International, he played a major role in the development of chiropractic education in Australia and Asia, particularly in Japan, in crucial formative years.

From 1989 to 2000, Dr Sweaney was the first representative of the Pacific Region elected to serve on the WFC Council. At the Council’s first meeting, in Toronto in 1989, he was elected to the Executive as Secretary Treasurer, subsequently serving as Vice

President and then President from 1995 to 1998. No one had a more influential role in the formative years of the WFC, and he was admired by all for his leadership skills.

Dr Sweaney’s crowning achievement, reflecting the respect in which he is held not only by the profession but also by others, was being invited by the World Health Organization to be its consultant and principal author for the *WHO Guidelines on Basic Training and Safety in Chiropractic* published in 2005. These guidelines, which were later translated into 11 languages and have led to first or greater acceptance of chiropractic by governments in many countries, represent a major milestone in the history of the chiropractic profession. It was in the following year that the WFC Council voted to name the keynote address at the Assembly after Dr Sweaney.

Those who have been previously honored to give *The John A. Sweaney Lecture*

The inaugural speech in Vilamoura, Portugal, in May 2007 was given by Dr John Sweaney³; the next in Montreal, Canada, in 2009, by his wife Dr Inger Villadsen, originally from Denmark and a prominent chiropractor herself; and the third, in 2011 in Rio de Janeiro, by Dr Scott Haldeman. Most recently, Dr Louis Sportelli delivered the fourth John A Sweaney Lecture on April 6, 2013, at the Assembly at the WFC’s 25th Anniversary Congress held in Durban, South Africa.⁴

Conclusion

The WFC hopes that *The John A. Sweaney Lecture* will continue to challenge and inspire the chiropractic profession for many years to come.

References

1. Phillips RB. The global advance of chiropractic: the World Federation of Chiropractic 1988-2013. Toronto, Canada: Publisher World Federation of Chiropractic; 2013.
2. World Federation of Chiropractic by laws. http://www.wfc.org/website/images/wfc/docs/wfc_bylaw_06-05.pdf.
3. An international display of chiropractic WFC 9th Biennial Congress highlights past, present and future of the profession. Dynamic chiropractic—July 16, 2007, vol. 25, issue 15. http://www.dynamicchiropractic.com/pdf_out/DynamicChiropractic.com-An-International-Display-of-Chiropractic-1381619704.pdf.
4. WFC quarterly world report, June 30, 2013. https://www.wfc.org/website/images/wfc/qwr/QWR201306_finalamended_July7.pdf.