

Evidence Based Wellness Care

An interview with James L. Chestnut, B.Ed., M.Sc., D.C., C.C.W.P., the developer and lead instructor of the ICA Wellness Certification Program that provides chiropractors with the expertise required to practice evidence-based wellness and the credentials to show it.

DR. JAMES L. CHESTNUT has been studying human wellness for over 25 years. He has a Bachelor of Physical Education degree, a Master of Science degree in exercise physiology with a specialization in neurological adaptation, is a Doctor of Chiropractic from the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College in Toronto, Canada, and holds a post-graduate Certification in Wellness.

Dr. Chestnut is chair of the new International Chiropractors Association (ICA) Council on Wellness Science and is a member of the ICA Committee on Chiropractic Postgraduate Education. In addition, he is the developer and lead instructor for the ICA Wellness Certification Program, which is the first recognized post-graduate education wellness certification in chiropractic history. Dr. Chestnut was named “2007 Chiropractic Educator of the Year” by the ICA and was also just named “2009 Parker Seminars Chiropractor of the Year.”

In addition to publishing peer-reviewed scientific articles, he has also published four books. His first book, *The 14 Foundational Premises*, was recognized with an award of distinction from the International Chiropractic Association as a significant contribution to the scientific literature validating chiropractic and is now being used as a textbook. His latest books, *The Innate Diet™*, *Innate Physical Fitness™*, and *The Innate State of Mind™*, have set the standard for evidence-based wellness care and are the course texts for the ICA Wellness Certification Program. Dr. Chestnut’s revolutionary concepts of **Eat Well - Move Well - Think Well™** as the genetically required lifestyle foundations of wellness and prevention have not only clarified what the practice of wellness is, they have simplified it for both patients and clinicians.

TAC: What is it that prompted you to begin exploring the wellness aspect of healthcare 24 years ago?

CHESTNUT: I’m not sure that I could name any specific event or epiphany that prompted my interest in what we would now call wellness. My exploration began as, and remains, more



AWARD. DR. CHESTNUT PROUDLY ACCEPTS THE ICA EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD IN LAS VEGAS.

of an evolutionary journey or perhaps an osmotic accumulation, rather than an identifiable single event.

As the son of a Ph.D biologist, I have been a raging biophilic for as long as I can remember. For the sake of my reputation, I better define *biophilia*. It is simply the love and appreciation of nature. I spent much of my youth in the wilderness and studying animals and ecosystems and that influenced my paradigm of life and, later, health science immensely.

As my education and research evolved, I combined my understanding and love of nature and natural ecosystems with what I was learning about human physiology and it all just started coming together in what could best be described as an emerging

wellness paradigm. This paradigm has guided my research ever since.

TAC: Where would you place chiropractic adjustments or subluxation correction on the totem pole of achieving optimal health?

CHESTNUT: I don’t believe that achieving health can be accurately described by a hierarchical linear pole. If my research has made me sure of anything it is that health is neither linear nor hierarchical. There are no hierarchies in holism, and wellness and health are most certainly holistic concepts.

For instance, asking which of either nutrition, exercise or psychological wellbeing is most important for health is absurd. Once you understand the true nature of health, and what is required to express it, asking hierarchical questions becomes an exercise in futility.

There are hierarchies when it comes to survival, but not when it comes to producing homeostasis and health. If you were to ask me where getting adjusted sits on the totem pole of survival, I would have to answer honestly that it sits lower on the pole than breathing, eating, or drinking water. Obviously, any SANE person would recognize that we can live longer without an adjustment than oxygen, food, or water. The point is WHO CARES? This is not the question we are seeking to answer



SPEAKER. DR. CHESTNUT IS AN INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED EXPERT IN WELLNESS AND REGULARLY SPEAKS TO BOTH CLINICIANS AND THE LAY PUBLIC IN THE U.K., EUROPE, AUSTRALIA, CANADA AND THE U.S.

in wellness. Wellness asks, “What are ALL the things we require to express our potential for health and happiness and vitality?”

The whole point of wellness is to address ALL possible interferences (toxicities or deficiencies) because a human being cannot be well unless they have sufficiency in the genetically required environmental raw materials and are free from environmental toxins or stressors. In order to be well, we must eat well, move well, and think well at the same time, for a period of time.

TAC: Can you tell us a bit about your Eat Well – Move Well – Think Well™ concept?

CHESTNUT: The Eat Well – Move Well – Think Well™ concept is designed to communicate the essence of the wellness paradigm and of wellness practice. It is designed to make it abundantly clear that, if we are going to discuss, study, or practice wellness and prevention, we need to understand that wellness and prevention are holistic concepts that recognize that our health is the product of our lifestyle choices—of how we eat, move, and think.

The idea was to come up with a phrase that captured the essence of wellness and prevention and make it easily understandable. I am proud to say that it has had this exact effect all over the world for both practitioners and the lay public. In fact, it has been so successful that I had to trademark it all over the world because people kept trying to use it as their own—including some hospitals!

TAC: Who would you consider your greatest mentor in chiropractic?

CHESTNUT: That is a VERY difficult and, I might add, a very loaded question. The truth is no single person comes to mind, so let me mention a few.

Drs. Gerry Clum and Fabrizio Mancini have both become mentors, confidants and, if I can be so presumptuous, friends. They continually support our profession in ways that represent unity rather than division. I am grateful to be able to publicly thank them both.

Dr. Bob Rowe from British Columbia, Canada, is also a wonderful mentor. He has unselfishly and devotedly served on the college board in my province for years and he is a true friend, mentor, supporter, and patriarch to every chiropractor who has the sense to seek his guidance—especially new graduates. It is also nice to have the opportunity to acknowledge his contribution and I do so on behalf of many.

Dr. Ron King was, without any doubt, the most wise, the most loving, the most inspiring, and the most kind clinician and teacher I had during my years at chiropractic college. He was the perfect role model for tolerance and unification for our profession and the impact of his wisdom on me grows with time and experience.

Dr. Richard Baxter and I have worked together since we graduated; he now teaches some of the wellness certification modules and works with me, along with another great chiropractor and person, Dr. Keith Milne, on a full time basis developing the Eat Well – Move Well – Think Well Innate Lifestyle™ Program. I am truly blessed to have colleagues and friends with such integrity, intelligence, and passion.

TAC: At what point did you know that your passion evolved from clinical practice to teaching the Chiropractic Wellness Certification Program and lecturing about wellness around the world?

CHESTNUT: I always knew I would lecture. My first degree was in education and I taught undergraduate classes while completing my Master of Science degree.

FEATURE [Interview]

For as long as I can remember, I wanted to be a professor and, in fact, had already been accepted to do a Ph.D. before changing my mind at the last minute to attend chiropractic college.

When I decided to go to chiropractic school, I felt it was to educate and lecture patients, and then I just realized that there was a HUGE need for education within the chiropractic profession—especially about wellness and also the physiological effects of subluxation and the adjustment. Even before I left chiropractic college I was doing lectures. It is just my calling.

TAC: What is the most important factor in motivating patients to follow through with their care?

CHESTNUT: I don't believe we should try to motivate patients; I believe that motivation is an external phenomenon and, thus, inevitably does not result in lasting change or lasting ability to sustain change. It creates dependence rather than independence. I believe we must inspire and empower patients with education, support, coaching, role-modeling and, most importantly, with a skill set regarding how to change the belief systems that determine their lifestyle choices.

I have always said that behavior modification does not work—only belief system modification does. Our behaviors are the EFFECTS of our beliefs and, if you don't change the belief, you won't get lasting behavior change. Beliefs determine behaviors—every time. The way to empower people to change is to make them aware of their belief systems, give them the education required to form healthy belief systems, and then give them the skill set to change their belief systems.

This is really the most important issue in wellness because, if the patients don't make the necessary lifestyle changes, they will not benefit. This is exactly why I spend so much time on this subject and, again, why we developed the Eat Well – Move Well – Think Well Innate Lifestyle™ Program.

TAC: How does the epigenetic theory apply to your protocols?

CHESTNUT: The concept of epigenetics does not just apply to my protocols; my protocols are intrinsically based on the science of epigenetics. Epigenetics, for those who are not familiar with the concept, is the study of how the epigenome controls genetic expression. The epigenome is the protein coating on the outside of the DNA that determines whether or not a gene is available to be copied and expressed.

As the epigenome is controlled by internal and external environmental signals (i.e., how we eat, move, and think) it is now clear that the gene control theory of health and sickness was incorrect or, at least, severely and critically incomplete and misleading. Genes do, indeed, control biochemistry and physiology; but genes don't control themselves. Genes have no autonomy regarding whether or not they get read and expressed—this is under the control of epigenetics. Epigenetic science has made it clear that there is a determinant of physiology and biochemistry ABOVE genes and that this determinant is environmental.

The real question then becomes, "What environmental signals do human genes require in order to express healthy physiology and biochemistry?" In other words, we need to identify the eating, moving, and thinking patterns that are required by the human genome in order to genetically express health.



NATURALIST. WHETHER TEACHING AT HIS INNATE LIFESTYLE CAMPS OR SPENDING TIME WITH HIS FAMILY, DR. CHESTNUT CONSTANTLY USES NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS AS TOOLS FOR BOTH EDUCATION AND INSPIRATION.

These are the questions I researched and answered in my three books, *The Innate Diet*™, *Innate Physical Fitness*™, and *The Innate State of Mind*™ and the answers form the basis for both the Wellness Certification Program and the Eat Well – Move Well – Think Well Innate Lifestyle™ Program.

TAC: What is your greatest accomplishment?

CHESTNUT: Without any doubt, my greatest accomplishment is that I have earned the love, trust, and respect of family, friends, and many colleagues. I have the privilege to call some of the most amazing human beings on this earth friends and I have always felt humbled by the quality of people who choose to be in my life—especially, of course, my partner Lori and her son Tyson.

I can't logically claim that my daughter Meghan chooses to be in my life, but I can tell you that she loves, trusts, and respects me and, even more importantly, that she would tell you without hesitation how much I love, trust and respect her.

I can think of no greater accomplishments.

TAC: What do you think the future holds in terms of your contribution to the chiropractic profession?

CHESTNUT: I think that a very important contribution will be that, through the Wellness Certification Program, I will provide chiropractors with the expertise required to practice evidence-based wellness and to have the credentials to show it. I am passionate about the fact that wellness must be seen as a field of expertise and not simply a marketing tool. I believe strongly that claiming to offer wellness without any formal education, delivery system, or credentials poses a danger to the public and to the credibility of the wellness movement as a whole.

Inevitably, I believe my greatest contribution will be the Eat Well – Move Well – Think Well Innate Lifestyle™ Program. It is an applied educational program that teaches people how to live a lifestyle that maximizes their ability to genetically express their human potential. It allows practitioners to provide this vital service to individuals, groups, organizations or entire corporations in a format that is easy and comfortable for both practitioner and client.

It is the culmination and clinical manifestation of 25 years of research and I believe it will revolutionize health care and change the health of the planet. I'm very excited that chiropractors can play a major role in solving the pandemic of chronic lifestyle diseases that are responsible for 80% of deaths and the vast majority of suffering and healthcare expenditure in the Industrial World. I don't think we have ever had such an opportunity and I am excited to help chiropractors play a significant role.

To contact Dr. Chestnut, go to www.thewellnesspractice.com. **TAC**