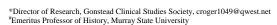
The Gonstead Clinical Studies Society

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With the passing of Clarence Gonstead, DC, the chiropractic world lost a towering figure; however the vision of chiropractic that had been espoused by the iconic founder of the Gonstead Technique would not die. In an effort to maintain, promote and with time perhaps improve the vision of chiropractic that had been promoted by Dr. Gonstead, nine individuals stepped forward. On a spring day in 1979 this group met in San Mateo, California to form the Gonstead Clinical Studies Society. Over the next thirty years the organization has been a force in the education of both chiropractic students and practicing doctors of chiropractic as well as an avid supporter of research. At times the road has not been without its difficulties, but in a world marked by associations which rise and fall, the Gonstead Clinical Studies Society still stands proudly. A bond of fellowship based on mutual respect and dedication has been woven into a lasting tapestry that has withstood the test of time.

Founder of the Vision

In 1923, Clarence Gonstead, DC began his practice of chiropractic. But Gonstead was far more than a talented clinician. In his 51 years of dedicated practice he originated, developed and lovingly nurtured a chiropractic technique that was to be taught to thousands of doctors of chiropractic who would practice the Gonstead method in their offices. Following his retirement in 1974, Dr. Gonstead sold his world renowned clinic in Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin and the teaching portion of his endeavors, the Gonstead Seminars, to Drs. Alex and Doug Cox and a scant two years later he had passed from this earth. But there are things more powerful than death and although the iconic founder was gone, the Gonstead technique had been infused, by its creator, with a life of its own. A number of dedi-



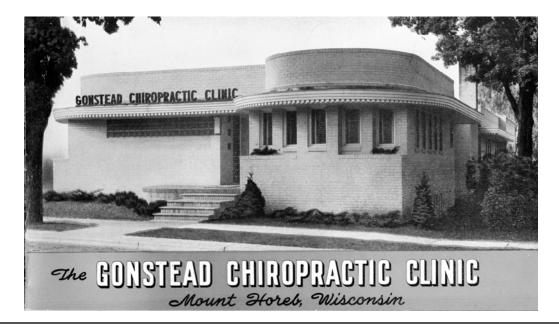
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Clarence Gonstead, DC

cated individuals stepped forward to perpetuate Dr. Gonstead's vision.

It was his unique vision of how a doctor of chiropractic should practice that made Clarence Gonstead a veritable giant in the profession. Gonstead recognized that



while the skeletal system was made up of individual parts, a misalignment of one area could have a devastating effect on other areas. He grasped and promoted the concept that the spine was not merely a stack of bones, but a complex dynamic structure whose proper functioning was vital to the health of the individual. Motivated by a burning desire to improve the health of his patients, he coupled careful observation with innovative thought to produce a systematic approach that could be used to analyze the three dimensional misalignments of skeletal alterations, to aid in the analysis of the subluxations which so grievously affected the lives of his patients. He then combined this specific directional analysis with the exact Gonstead Method adjustment procedure needed to correct each individual problem. Add to that an uncanny ability to teach his advancements to others and you have the vision which Gonstead brought to chiropractic.

It was this special vision a group of dedicated doctors of chiropractic desired to maintain, promote and perhaps, with time, improve. This group would unite to form an organization, spanning over thirty years, with the lofty goal of making Gonstead's

life's work a tool to change the practice of chiropractic. That organization would come to be known as the Gonstead Clinical Studies Society (GCSS).

Keepers of the Vision

On a spring day three years after Gonstead's death, nine doctors of chiropractic met with a singular purpose. "On April 28, 1979 at 12:15 P.M., the meeting was held to formulate the Gonstead Clinical Study Society." Those present at the meeting were Douglas Cox, D.C., Alex Cox, D.C., Jim Stoenner, D.C., Tom Sherman, D.C., Charles Nelson, D.C., Richard Thornton, D.C., Richard Gohl, D.C., Ed Crump, D.C. and Gary Bohn, D.C.. The task to nominate additional board members was delegated to the doctors of the Gonstead Clinic, which was looked upon by many as the epicenter of the Gonstead world, with the understanding that they would be selected in such a manner as to provide representation from all areas of the United States. By the end of this simple meeting held at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo, California, the Gonstead Clinical Studies Society (GCSS) was a reality.¹

The Work Begins

By January of 1980 a newsletter promoting the newly formed organization had been sent out to over 5000 practicing doctors of chiropractic. Board members were implored to establish study groups in their areas in order to teach the Gonstead technique and aid in soliciting new members for the growing organization.² The organizing continued at the first executive board meeting held in February of 1980 when the foundation was established for a regular newsletter to the members and the proposed use of "Diplomates" to provide personalized instruction in the practical application of the Gonstead Technique.³ The Diplomates were members of the organization who met a rigorous series of requirements. They must have attended a total of eight Gonstead Seminars of Chiropractic programs, with a minimum of two seminars annually, and one of these must have been held in Dr. Gonstead's former clinic in Mt. Horeb. They then received an invitation from the board of directors and had to pass written and practical-oral examinations administered by Gonstead Seminar of Chiropractic staff doctors. After successfully running this gauntlet, it was necessary for the doctors to annually undergo another practical-oral examination in order to maintain their Diplomate status.⁴ The practice of testing members of the Gonstead Clinical Studies Society continues to this day as does the convention of asking those who have maintained their proficiency as instructors to serve as mentors for the more junior members of the society. In fact, there is currently an annual seminar, the Meeting of the Minds (MOM), which only those who have reached the status of Diplomate or Fellow in the organization or have been in practice for at least twenty years are allowed to attend.

An important part of the Gonstead Technique has been its continued interest

in full spine radiography. Dr. Gonstead employed his distinctive analysis method of the 14x36 inch radiograph as a mainstay of the Gonstead Technique. This interest was apparent in the GCSS as early as 1980 with the organization's board discussing the feasibility of preparing a news release on the subject.⁵ And although many in the chiropractic profession have gravitated toward sectional films as their preferred method of imaging, the GCSS has continued to point to the importance of full spine radiography. To that end they have invested both time and money in this endeavor and the subject is discussed in the Textbook of Clinical Chiropractic: A Specific Biomechanical Approach, which has affectionately become known as the "purple book" due to its deep purple cover, and most recently in an article discussing the projectional aspects of the anteroposterior full spine view in the Journal of Chiropractic Medicine. 6,7 But those accomplishments would come in a future marked by both success and internal stress.

Success

While many organizations struggle during their formative years and others see their well intentioned endeavors thrown on the scrap heap of history, neither was the case with this group. In fact, in 1981, GCSS president Richard E. Thornton's mood was congratulatory. He celebrated the completion of a successful year, which had been topped off by a seminar and meeting in Hawai'i. Dr. Thornton was not only proud of the GCSS, but further reiterated the close connection of the group with the Gonstead Clinic at Mr. Horeb in a statement that announced, "One of the primary purposes of our organization is to assist the Gonstead Clinic and the promotion of the Gonstead work."8

Thornton had reason to celebrate. By April of 1981, the movement was already

underway for the expansion of student study groups. With a second membership drive, the Cleveland study group had now swelled to approximately one hundred strong and inquiries had been received concerning the formation of student groups at both Pacific States and Western States Colleges. The success among students was not the only shining light as the number of chiropractors who had joined the GCSS was now near 450.¹⁰ The organization was moving forward and was about to leap headlong into an activity which would occupy its attention and resources from that time to the present: the support of chiropractic research. This commitment to science would be a driving force within the organization and one that would eventually be a point of contention between some members of the GCSS and the Gonstead Seminars staff. The rift would eventually prove irreconcilable. But at this time, the future was bright and the foray into the choppy seas of supporting research began innocently enough with an announcement by Dr. Juan Ferry that Dr. Chung-Ha Suh, a well known chiropractic researcher and Professor of the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Colorado had been invited to attend the next board meeting to be held at the center of the Gonstead work, the clinic in Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin.9

Research in Ernest

A hallmark of the GCSS has always been its active pursuit of its goals and with Suh's visit to Mt. Horeb, Dr. Alden urged the group to be diligent in the ongoing effort to secure research funding so that monies would be available to donate to the important chiropractic work that was being headed by Dr. Suh. This call for donations was not entirely impartial since Suh's research work included the study of the x-ray distortion factors present in the 14x36

inch full spine view, which has been a continued passion of Gonstead devotees. With a spirit of optimistic generosity stirred by the hope offered by this prominent researcher's important undertaking, the GCSS's Diplomates pledged over \$23,000 to the project with an additional \$1,000 being pledged by each of the Gonstead Clinic doctors. ¹²

Money was not the only assistance given to Suh. In March of 1982, the GCSS announced that Dr. Suh was to head a conference at Palmer West in Sunnyvale, California. In December of that year, the society stated their intention to present a research paper at the proceedings¹³. Nor were its efforts of support directed only to projects outside the organization. Dr. Juan K. Ferry proposed that time should be set aside at each of the semiannual meetings or seminars to have a program where the Diplomates could present unusual cases as this would give the attendees exposure to many types of conditions that they might not have encountered in their practices.¹⁴

The Suh project progressed and by October of 1983 the work was approximately 80% completed. The GCSS indicated they would complete the donation of the first \$30,000 which had been dedicated to the project before deciding upon what additional funding they might provide. 15 Their generosity was rewarded as a booklet was distributed at the board meeting concerning the computer which was available to run Dr. Suh's x-ray analysis program and it was announced that Suh would soon personally conduct a class to teach the use of the program. 16 But this was not the only return for their support as the group soon received an even newer version of the x-ray analysis program and data collection sheets from Mark Folsum in Boulder, Colorado.¹⁷ The close connection between the group and Dr. Suh was further reinforced with the letter from Thornton discussing his attendance at the 15th Annual Biomechanics Conference held in Seoul. South Korea in October of 1984. Dr. Thornton had been invited to present a paper concerning the clinical use of the x-ray analysis program. In his presentation, Thornton pointed out that the GCSS had now funded the Suh research in the amount of \$40,000. During the next day of the conference, at Dr. Suh's request, Dr. Thornton gave an interview to a local television station which included an adjustment of Suh by Thornton. Thornton also met with leaders from colleges in Japan and Australia and spent time with Drs. Jerry McAndrews, Sid Williams and Carl Cleveland of the United States. Finally, he was presented with a plaque from the Korean Chiropractic Association which in part expressed, "...the deepest gratitude for your assistance to the development of Korean Biomechanics and Chiropractic". 18 By any estimation, the trip had been a success and the GCSS was a player in the world of chiropractic research.

In the fall of 1986, the editor of the GCSS Newsletter praised a presentation made by Dr. Ed Cremata, an instructor at Life Chiropractic College-West as well as a private practitioner in Fremont, California, who presented current scientific research that supported the Gonstead adjustive system.¹⁹ GCSS Research Co-Chairman Cremata continued to point out the society's belief in the importance of research when in 1987 he noted that the Gonstead technique was continually evolving and dedicated to incorporating the latest scientific information into their method of care. He proudly announced the completion of the group's first pilot research project on the subject of positional changes after spinal adjustments and further defined the group's position regarding research, "The Gonstead Clinical Studies Society places a great emphasis on clinically applicable research that will help doctors reduce subluxations faster

and more permanently than currently possible." 20

Another scientist in the organization was Dr. Greg Plaugher who would come to be one of the most recognized names in chiropractic research. An author of numerous scientific articles, he has held the position of Director of Research for both the GCSS and Life Chiropractic College West in Hayward, California. In addition, Plaugher and Mark Lopes, DC, were driving forces behind the "purple book." Finally, a listing of the next generation of leaders would be remiss without taking note of others who rose in the organization. Claudia Anrig, DC was extremely active in the group. Serving as a board member and president of the GCSS, she also flexed her scientific muscle as co-editor of the *Pediatric Chiropractic* book while Jeanne Taylor, DC, an avid supporter of the need for research, was eventually to take the role of the first Executive Director in GCSS history.²¹ Dr. David Rowe made his contributions as the society's longest serving board member, a contributing author to the "purple book" and an editor of one of the GCSS's newsletters, the G Note. Drs. Linda Mullin, the first Executive Secretary, and Steve Tanaka, an editor of the International Journal of Chiropractic further aided the cause. The group possessed many members who were happy to take part in supporting the society's efforts in education and research.

Over and over the GCSS had expressed and taken action to demonstrate support for its belief in the importance of research. But storm clouds were building on the horizon as a prominent member of the GCSS and the new owner of Gonstead Seminars Inc., Dr. John Cox was about to voice concerns over this endeavor.

A Parting of the Ways

In an open letter to Dr. John Cox et. al., a man whose father and uncle had pur-

chased the Gonstead Clinic from Clarence Gonstead, Dr. Greg Plaugher addressed the events which had occurred at a contentious meeting held on April 15, 2000 in the basement of the Mr. Horeb clinic. At that meeting, the letter indicated that although the Gonstead Seminars held five permanent seats on the GCSS board, Cox felt that the GCSS had not been helpful to Gonstead Seminars Inc. and he had questioned the clinical necessity for the group's ongoing research.²²

To many in the group whose efforts had fostered and promoted the organization's present structure and watched it become a force in the chiropractic community, especially in the efforts to promote chiropractic research, this revelation of Dr. John Cox's thoughts was distressing. Abandonment of research would be a drastic departure from the well established path that had been set by the organization and would forever change the very character of the group and might have resulted in its dissolution. These concerns prompted a diplomatic response.

In an apparent effort to pour oil on these troubled waters ten members of the group replied. They suggested the GCSS should move forward and focus on doing a better job of working together for what had always been the society's goals of improving the health and lives of their patients.²³

However the attempt to return to the cohesive group of before would not be possible. Unbeknownst to Dr. Cox and the rest of the GCSS, it was inappropriate for the non-profit GCSS to support the for-profit Gonstead Seminars of Chiropractic and a separation of the two groups was therefore a necessity. While the GCSS had stumbled, its international membership came from sturdy stock. The input and blending of the thoughts and support of such a dedicated group of chiropractors had forged a movement that would not easily fall.

The Vision Reborn

The members once again renewed their commitment to the work that had driven the GCSS. Over the first decade of the new millennium they slowly but progressively became a more mature and sophisticated group. They expanded their efforts promote the Gonstead Technique through seminars in the United States and abroad, along with continuing their support of the Gonstead student clubs at many chiropractic colleges and universities. members joined with Gonstead Methodology Inc., another association dedicated to promoting the Gonstead work, to present the Gonstead Extravaganza, which is currently held annually at the Gonstead Clinic. Their yearly Meeting of the Minds conference attracts international attendance and brings together the best and brightest in the organization. They also continue to recognize the importance of ongoing chiropractic research. The GCSS employs an executive director and a director of research and allocates over \$30,000 annually to in house research efforts. The society sponsors two publications, the Scope and the more formal G-Note, and its members have produced two text books, the Textbook of Clinical Chiropractic: A Specific Biomechanical Approach and Pediatric Chiropractic, which will soon be in its second edition.^{6,21} And members of the GCSS have authored numerous articles which have been published in distinguished scientific journals (Table 1). The Gonstead Clinical Studies Society has succeeded over the last thirty years in not only surviving but thriving and its future seems bright. From a small formative group has grown a vibrant living organization. In a world marked by associations that rise and fall, the GCSS still stands proudly. A bond of fellowship based on mutual respect and dedication has been woven into a lasting tapestry that has withstood the test of time.

Acknowledgements:

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Table 1.

Periodicals of the Gonstead Clinical Studies Society

The G Note

The G Note was first published in May of 1999 as a short newsletter to accompany the International Journal of Chiropractic with Linda Mullin, DC as the editor. It resumed publication in the fall of 2000 with Steven Tanaka, DC as editor. A position he continues to hold. The G Note is a quarterly publication of on-going research and scientific articles pertinent to the Gonstead doctor. Issues are published in March, June, September and December.

The Scope

The Scope was first published in April 2003 with Michele Hohmann as editor, a position she continues to hold. The Scope is a quarterly publication which seeks to keep readers abreast of all that is happening in the Gonstead world, plus clinical articles and practice tips. The Scope publishes in February, April, July and November.

International Journal of Chiropractic

The International Journal of Chiropractic was the official publication of the Gonstead Clinical Studies Society. It was established in 1981 with a three time a year publication schedule. It provided a forum for the publication of papers dealing with the Gonstead System and the Art, Science and Philosophy of Chiropractic. Joel Alcantara, DC served as the final editor and the journal ceased publication in 1999.

Text Books by Gonstead Clinical Studies Society Members

Textbook of Clinical Chiropractic: A Specific Biomechanical Approach published in 1993. Editor Gregory Plaugher, DC, Associate Editor Mark A. Lopes, DC.

Pediatric Chiropractic published in 1998. Editors Claudia Anrig, DC and Gregory Plaugher, DC. (Work is underway on a second edition.)

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