

ANNETTE BOURDON

CHIROPRACTIC ADVOCATE, PRACTITIONER, SPOKESPERSON AND SUPPORTER



"I was one of those rare individuals who has had chiropractic care since birth," says alumna Dr. Annette Bourdon (Class of '85). Her mother, a registered nurse born in Indiana, had five children, all of whom received adjustments since infancy. "My mother was always an advocate and champion for chiropractic – I can remember her explaining the benefits to people she thought it could help – wherever she was. In our family, our chiropractor was the go-to person for all health-related matters. There is a treatment room dedicated to Bourdon's mother at the CMCC Campus Clinic that reads Catherine Bourdon: Proud mother of two chiropractors and true ambassador for chiropractic.

"I remember when I first decided to become a chiropractor. I was in the kitchen with my family. One of my older siblings suggested that I

consider becoming a chiropractor. I promptly responded that they were out of their mind and adamantly insisted that there was no way I was going to University for six years to become a chiropractor. Then, I stormed out of the room!" That same night, she says with a laugh, she must have been visited by the ghost of BJ Palmer, because by morning, she had decided that was exactly what she would do. "I was 16, about to finish grade 11, and I sacrificed my summer to take a physics credit so that I could study sciences at University. Previous to that, I was eager to begin working and not interested in years and years of study." Today Bourdon is a continuing education supporter and goes by the motto "If you coast, you're toast." She continues, "Life is about learning and giving back. If you aren't learning and growing, you are not living." Today both Bourdon and her brother, Dr. Gary Bourdon (Class of '77), are chiropractors. Annette has also become a spokesperson for the profession, as well as taking on a number of other professional roles.

In her busy solo practice, Bourdon cares for families, "I have been blessed to have had some patients with me since the very beginning, 33 years ago." She also treats athletes, former Olympians, Iron Man enthusiasts and "back in the day," she says, the Montreal Expos.

Continual Education and Technology

"I am very big on Continuing Education and upping my game," she explains. In exploring techniques, she moved from diversified to Motion Palpation, then to Pierce Technique and then Activator. She believes

that pre- and post-treatment X-rays are important. "In addition to being a valuable diagnostic tool, patients should have the opportunity to see the condition of their spine and understand why they need care as well as their improvement over time."

"I know some people feel we should stick with our roots, but with the technology that is now available, I owe it to my patients to offer them the best treatment available. I'm also aware of the fact that some people aren't comfortable with manual adjustments and believe we should offer something else." In 2011 she began treating her patients with a sophisticated computerized adjusting machine made by Sigma Instruments. The Sigma technology has software that analyzes the stiffness of the spine and then the chiropractor adjusts the targeted areas using multiple percussions."

"I don't throw the baby out with the bathwater, but I do like to continue to learn. As technology advances and research reveals new information, I add skills and knowledge to my experience which I believe makes me a better practitioner."

Bourdon is married to Dr. Richard Roy, also featured in this issue, and has explored many of the same techniques that Roy has explored or used in his research.

Giving Back

Bourdon became involved in an educational group called Quest Alliance early on. "That was my introduction to patient advocacy. But Quest wasn't just about patient

education and practice management, it focused on personal growth – vision, commitment, integrity and purpose. It helped its participants understand that there is a much bigger vision for their life and that what is important is giving back.” This is a philosophy that has guided Bourdon through her career and led to a rich and deep involvement with chiropractic professional groups and advocacy. “I will always be so grateful to those who sacrificed so much for our profession and fought for our place in the health care field. I owe it to those visionaries to do all that I can to keep the flame burning. I can only hope that my generation will inspire the young chiropractors and that they will continue to preserve and promote our great profession. Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country,” she adds.

OCQ and CCPA

When the Canadian Chiropractic Protective Association (CCPA) recruited her, she was volunteering with the disciplinary committee for the Ordre des chiropraticiens du Québec (OCQ), where she served for 19 years – not a light endeavour, she admits, but she feels the experience contributed to making her a better chiropractor. “It made me more acutely aware of how things can be misinterpreted. Often through no fault of their own, a chiropractor can find themselves facing a formal complaint.” Today, she says, it has helped her with her work on the board of directors of the CCPA and intensified her appreciation of the important role the CCPA plays in protecting its members.

CCEB

Adding to her work with OCQ, she went to become an examiner with the Canadian Chiropractic Examining Board (CCEB). “I had a lot

of suggestions as to ways they could facilitate the job of the examiners and I shared them early on. This initiative resulted in me being asked to sit on the Board.” Eventually she became Chair and was proud of the work they did in keeping the exam standards high. “Learning about the psychometrics, the reliability, validity and practicality of questions was an interesting journey. When I started, there was no limit to the number of times a person could take the exam.” That changed on her watch, as she and fellow board members reflected on the question of public protection and the credibility of the profession in the future. Pleased with the quality of the CCEB exams today, Bourdon says that students who are successful at the exams, “should be very proud.”

CCA

While still on the CCEB Board and newly recruited to the CCPA, Bourdon was asked to become the national spokesperson for the CCA. She was pleased with the uptake by several mainstream publications interested in chiropractic and its applications to everyday life. “Reporters knew that we could give advice on things other than low back pain such as how to choose a back pack for your child or what to look for in a mattress, or help for headache management.” The journalists she spoke to seemed to understand that chiropractors had more to offer than simply spinal adjustments.

Today she says, “We need to work on public perception. We have so much to offer to lighten the load and help our beleaguered health care system.” I ask myself, “how did we get so far down the list when it comes to health care choices? Far too often, by the time patients end up in our offices, they’ve tried just

about everything and they’re often so discouraged.”

“When we talk about patient education, to me it’s important that a patient come for the right reasons but also that they stay for the right reasons. The same holds true for advocacy – get involved for the right reasons and encourage others to get involved. It can’t be about you and that means keeping your ego in check and focusing on how to best serve patients, the profession and our communities.”

Supporting CMCC

Aside from her volunteer and advocacy work, Bourdon has been a huge supporter of CMCC for many years and is a member of the Governors’ Club, a group of highly committed donors who have helped CMCC with capital projects including computer equipment such as iPads® for examinations and Force-Sensing Table Technology™ (FSTT®) for the Simulation Lab and technique areas and technology improvements. Through her part in the CMCC capital campaign, she in essence helped build CMCC’s current campus, which she continues to support. She has also given to the endowment that will continue to support CMCC’s McMorland Research Chair.

Encouraging students

Bourdon is pleased that one of her patients will be entering CMCC this fall. This will be the eighth she has encouraged to follow the chiropractic path.

Bourdon feels very blessed to have been called to serve the profession. “It’s been an amazing journey and I feel very fortunate. When I call it an honour and a privilege, I mean it. Every day I look forward to what I do and I go to bed at night, feeling like I’ve made a difference.”