



DC Scores a Chiropractic Goal in Italy

Successfully integrates with other health care professionals on Fiorentina's sidelines

By Amanda Donohue



John Pietila, DC, earned his doctor of chiropractic at Northwestern College of Chiropractic in 2002. Shortly after, he became a diplomate on the American Chiropractic Neurology Board. Dr. Pietila worked with Fiorentina, a professional soccer team in Florence, Italy, from 2009 to 2014 after being discovered by the team's medical doctor (MD) at a seminar where Dr. Pietila was a speaker. Impressed with Dr. Pietila's knowledge on injury prevention, the MD asked that he work alongside him in Italy. In 2013, Dr. Pietila worked with the Italian national soccer team during the FIFA Confederations Cup in Brazil and at the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil.

the seminar, he approached me and asked if I would be interested in working with the team. Fast-forward a year, I moved to Florence and began a six-month trial period. At the end of the trial period, the head doctor calculated that the injury rate dropped from 26 injuries/1,000 man-hours to only 4. He also found the average hamstring strain/sprain recovery period dropped from 54 days to only 14. Needless to say, they were impressed and renewed my contract for the next season. I worked with Fiorentina from January 2009 until May 2014.

What did you learn from working with the Italian national team during the Confederations Cup and the World Cup?

Many of the players mentioned to me that this was the first time they actually felt and played better at the end of the Cup than at the beginning. It is amazing how introducing chiropractic on a daily basis can bring about optimal health.

I learned how to work really fast, sometimes treating 30 or more players in one to two hours. I also learned how to work as part of a team working with, collaborating and exchanging ideas with massage therapists, physiotherapists, doctors, trainers, coaches and players to reach a common goal. We all supported each other's work and never worked against each other. All medical disciplines have their place and can be integrated with one another.

How was your experience working with MDs?

I found the MDs to be slightly guarded at first, but once realizing the potential of the treatments, they warmed up to chiropractic quickly. If there was an injury, they would do an evaluation, and then the treatment would either involve drugs, surgery or sending the player away. But for many of the injuries there was nothing they could do. They liked being able to send the player over to me for a speedy recovery. I think it was a very positive experience, because it showed how medical doctors and chiropractors can work very well together to bring about the best treatment options for the patient.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy spending time with my family, playing bass guitar in my band, growing a garden, and I am a VFR pilot. I also teach the Neuro-Target System to other chiropractors.

What are your hopes for the future of the profession?

I hope chiropractic and medical doctors can become more closely integrated. Working together has so much more to offer patients rather than working against each other. We all have our place and should know our limitations.

I also hope that chiropractic can continue to spread throughout the world. ■

What motivated you to become a doctor of chiropractic?

I always knew I wanted to be a doctor. Initially, I was thinking of being a podiatrist. Knowing my strengths and weaknesses, I was concerned with my ability to memorize all of the medications. As a year-round athlete in high school, I suffered a low-back injury for which my mom took me to the local chiropractor. I was immediately interested in becoming a chiropractor, especially when I saw that the doctor owned his own business, set his own hours, did not have to memorize medications and really helped a lot of people with pain, including me.

Why did you choose additional education/certification in neurology?

During chiropractic school I did a lot of exploration of chiropractic techniques, trying to define my philosophy and style. I found myself gravitating toward applied kinesiology and sacral occipital technique. After I graduated from chiropractic school, I attended an introductory seminar from the Carrick Institute about functional neurology. I was immediately hooked because this new philosophy gave me understanding of all the chiropractic techniques, and I decided to continue the courses.

Now, with each adjustment and therapy I do to a patient I think about the effects locally as well as cortically.

How did you come to work with Fiorentina?

I carved out my niche in chiropractic treating healthy athletes for injury prevention and performance optimization. In 2008, I taught a seminar on injury prevention in Amsterdam. Luckily for me, the head medical doctor of Fiorentina happened to be attending the seminar. Following



John Pietila, DC, ACA member since 1999. Send suggestions for future member profiles to ACANews@acatoday.org.