

SPINAL EXCHANGE

Did you catch the news? On July 1, 2009, The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) re-defined “physicians” under its hospital accreditation programs to include:

- Doctors of Medicine
- Doctors of Osteopathy
- Doctors of Dental Surgery/Medicine
- Doctors of Podiatric Medicine
- Doctors of Optometry
- Doctors of Chiropractic

The last two categories are causing a bit of a stir in medical circles because the revised definition was the first time that The Joint Commission recognized both optometrists and chiropractors as members of the “physician community.” While the issue is still sparking debate, the change is the latest in a series of events that have highlighted a growing recognition that chiropractic care has a legitimate place in the continuum of patient care. In fact, more than 100 hospitals in the United States now offer some form of chiropractic services.

Spinal Exchange Forum

At Southeast Hospital, physicians and doctors of chiropractic are bridging their professions with an innovative educational program called the Spinal Exchange Forum. The brainchild of **Scott R. Gibbs, MD, FACS**, a board-certified neurosurgeon of the Brain & NeuroSpine Clinic of Missouri and a member of the Medical Staff at Southeast, the Forum provides an open atmosphere to exchange treatment ideas among a diverse group, including family practice physicians, neurologists, neurosurgeons, rehabilitation physicians, pain management physicians, physical therapists and chiropractic specialists.



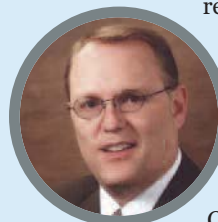
Jack Mills, DC, with Scott Gibbs, MD, FACS

“We are not individual silos offering only our perspective anymore,” says Dr. Gibbs. “My vision is that the Forum improves the understanding of the value each of us brings to the care of patients. The first step is the laying down of our biases regarding each other so that we can open a sincere dialogue.”

The Spinal Exchange Forum debuted in February 2010 with Dr. Gibbs and **Jack Mills, DC**, addressing the issue of *The Effects of Time and Gravity on the Cervical Spine*. This quarterly Forum focuses on a single health-related subject, tackling it from the involved disciplines treatment plan perspectives. Guest speakers present current treatment options and allow time for questions and dialogue.

“We definitely foster an atmosphere of respect and collaboration throughout our discussions,” says Dr. Gibbs. “I think that’s the reason why attendance at the forum continues to grow. Recently, we had more than 100 attendees.”

In the June 2010 Forum, **Aaron Koonce, DO**, a board-certified neurologist with Southeast Neurology and a former chiropractor himself, led a discussion on *The Management of Headaches* with **Greg Pursley, DC**.



“In today’s medicine, there’s a place for collaboration,” says Dr. Koonce. “For example, in treating back pain, it’s not always going to be beneficial to just prescribe medicine and surgery is not always a foregone conclusion. In these cases, it may be that chiropractic services are the best option to alleviate or minimize pain. Chiropractic services also might be used in either pre- or post-operative care plans. The forum allows us to think beyond what we each provide to patients so that we can work together to get patients healthy.”

Dr. Gibbs agrees. “We can optimize patient performance by examining the role of spinal stability both pre-operatively and post-operatively,” he says. “There’s no question the patient would benefit from strengthening and stabilization even if a decision was made to undergo surgical intervention.”

Embracing Efforts

Logan College of Chiropractic in St. Louis is a strong advocate of the Spinal Exchange Forum. Faculty and students from the college have traveled to Cape Girardeau to lecture at the programs or be active participants.

“It’s imperative for healthcare students to embrace and understand how efforts to integrate treatment options and medical disciplines can improve healthcare for all and potentially lower the escalating costs of care,” says **Laney Nelson, DC, DACBSP**, director of the BIOFREEZE® Sports & Rehabilitation Center at Logan College. “Healthcare providers need to adopt the philosophy that any treatment will work if it is applied at the right time. The best physicians are those who are sensitive to the timing of their treatment. They are also sensitive to the timing of referral in order to maximize the treatment of others.”

Taking It To The Next Level

The burgeoning collaboration and camaraderie between Southeast Hospital and Logan College of Chiropractic/University programs is moving into other areas. Working with these entities, Dr. Gibbs’s vision includes

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the creation of a Neuro-Spine Academy at Southeast. The goal of the Academy, he says, is to design a regular clinical observation experience for chiropractic students, one that shows the full spectrum of spinal surgery decision making from initial diagnosis and consultation through surgery and post-surgical care.

“Gaining an understanding of surgical decision making and the role that pre- and post-surgical chiropractic care can play in overall recovery is a positive example of this integrative healthcare approach.”

— Dr. George A. Goodman

“Healthcare has been moving toward a more integrative approach for the past decade,” says Logan College of Chiropractic President **Dr. George A. Goodman**. “Gaining an understanding of surgical decision making and the role that pre- and post-surgical chiropractic care can play in overall recovery is a positive example of this integrative healthcare approach. In fact, Logan has utilized the knowledge of orthopedic surgeons and other medical doctors in its postgraduate program for a number of years.”

In addition to Southeast Hospital’s quarterly forums, Dr. Gibbs is planning and working with Logan College and the Hospital to create a “Performance Academy,” which will bring together doctors of chiropractic, physicians, physical therapists and nurses on a variety of topics. Slated to occur on Logan’s St. Louis campus, March 4 to 6, 2011, the Academy’s main objective is to give all

healthcare providers and administrators the tools for establishing collaborative relationships.

“We can transcend a competitive market and make it more collaborative,” stresses Dr. Nelson. “Ultimately, my goal at Logan College is to elevate the performance of my profession. I think all of the collaborative efforts with Southeast Hospital and the Brain and NeuroSpine Clinic of Missouri are examples of elevating the field of chiropractic care — and really, elevating healthcare as a whole.”

“It’s a natural fit as we evolve healthcare in this country,” agrees **Kathy Vickery**, MSN, RN, MBA, Director of Patient Care Services at Southeast. “We don’t just treat a patient within the four walls of a medical office or a hospital. We’re following patients outside these walls into outpatient clinics and other healthcare settings. By

building relationships among all specialties and disciplines, we truly can focus on what treatment paths will offer the greatest outcome for our patients.”

For more information about the Spinal Exchange Forum, email Rachel Underwood at runderwood@sehosp.org

