

Chiropractic in Russia Update

By Dr. Sherry Durrett

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have no access to Chiropractic Care? Well that has been the plight for the majority of the citizens of Russia. But the good news is, slowly but surely things are changing for the people there.

Beginning in mid-September, the first Chiropractic Clinic in St. Petersburg, Russia officially opened and was legally able to begin seeing patients.

Dr. Alexander Konovalov, '04 Palmer graduate, moved to St. Petersburg in August 2006 and spent the first several weeks settling into his new town and getting through all of the red-tape necessary to legally work and reside in Russia.



Dr. Alexander Konovalov, not far from his apartment by the beautiful Summer Gardens with the famous Church of Our Savior on Spilled Blood in the background.

Persistence paid off and by mid-September all of the requirements were met and Dr. Konovalov was officially able to start working out of the Chiropractic Clinic that had been in the works of establishment for the past sixteen months, in the out-patient clinic at St. Elizabeth Hospital, one of the leading hospitals in Russia.

At the end of September and first part of October I was able to return to Russia to check on the progress of the Chiropractic expansion project there in St. Petersburg and to help Dr. Konovalov with some of the clinic start-up activities and promotions and I will report to you some of the highlights of this, my most recent trip.

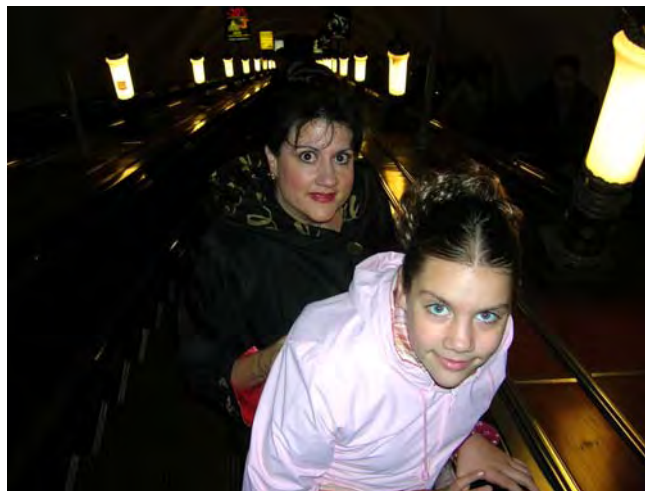


Aerial view right over St. Petersburg area

Upon arriving, the weather was beautiful. Sadly, this was short lived and we experienced only fleeting moments of this throughout my stay this time. For the most part, this time of the year is when things begin to move towards wet and cold.

As I mentioned, the main purpose of this trip was to work with Dr. Konovalov regarding organizing and running a successful practice with the idea in mind that he is the only Chiropractor in a city of millions and the only Chiropractor in this entire region of the country of Russia.

Our first objective on Monday morning was to get the Chiropractic Clinic. For this I needed the help of Dr. Konovalov assisting me in navigating the public transportation system. Not being able to read Russian puts me at a serious disadvantage. But this trip I was determined to get around more with public transportation. So, Dr. Konovalov showed me the route to take through the metros and I memorized which ways to walk, which trains and lines to get on, and how many stops I needed to count before changing trains or getting off. I was very impressed with how well Dr. Konovalov already knows his way around all parts of town and has mastered most of the modes of transportation there.



My daughter Demme Durrett and I on the longest escalator I have ever seen, in one of the many metro stations that we navigated during the trip.

By the end of the week, I actually was able to recognize the station names when they were announced and could almost read, or at least recognize some of the characters that made up many of the stations on the line that I most frequently used.

Once we arrive at the closest metro station to the hospital, we got on a mini-bus for a short ride. The stop and drop off point for this mini-bus's route is the morgue of the hospital. At first I thought Dr. Konovalov was just kidding me, but a few steps past the stop I was greeted by the faint odor of decomposing bodies and I realized that in fact, he was not kidding. It is not customary to embalm bodies in Russia and they are typically buried within 48 hours.

We do arrive to the entrance for the Out-Patient clinic where the Chiropractic Clinic is located. Fortunately, it is nice distance away from the morgue!



One of the four major wings of St. Elizabeth Hospital



Dr. Durrett, Dr. A. Taitz, Dr. Konovalov, Larry Berg
Outside the entrance to the Out-Patient Clinic

I have to say that it was a big treat to arrive at the office this time due to the fact that it was now a real Chiropractic Clinic. On my previous trip in June I had shipped adjusting tables, posters, and some other office items. We had also gone to IKEA and purchased furnishings and other items, but I had to return to the States before they were all through customs or assembled and arranged in the office as we had laid out in the planning.

So, when I arrived, it looked great, felt great and come to find out is now the highlight of the hospital. It is a main stop of every official tour through the hospital that the Chief Doctor does. It is the best looking office in the hospital, by far. People come by just to see it and experience it since it has such a great feel about it. Some wonder why we would care that it looks so nice and would be so comfortable for the patients. Customer service concepts are a little slower in being fully recognized in the former USSR.



Larry Berg, Dr. Konovalov, Dr. Durrett, and Dr. Boris Taitz,
Chief Doctor of St. Elizabeth Hospital at the end of one of our meetings

More than anything else I relished in what a joy it was in seeing how very well Dr. Konovalov and the Chiropractic profession were welcomed there at the hospital. The staff have embraced both Dr. Konovalov as well as the profession, and are genuinely very glad to have Chiropractic there.

It did not take long for the word to get out that Chiropractic services were being offered to the staff. Dr. Konovalov is caring for many of them and has received many referrals ranging from their friends and family as well as those patients walking in to the hospital with issues that he might be able to help with.



Larry Berg, Dr. Mindia Gulua, Dr. Durrett, Dr. Konovalov
Dr. Mindia is the Chief Surgeon of the Hospital and a good friend of Dr. Konovalov's
He gave us a very warm welcome as did the rest of the staff.

The coming days of this working trip were marked by in-office training and planning as well as meetings with various people who are helping with the project in some way.



Dr. Konvalov, Dr. Durrett, and Larry Berg
The adjusting table serves as our conference table for much of the work

Some of the important contacts for this trip included meeting with Dr. Nikkoli Blinnikov, of the International Department of the Public Health Committee of St. Petersburg. It is this department that was instrumental in facilitating the arrival of Chiropractic in the northwest region of Russia.

Discussions on this trip with this committee centered around the bureaucracy and the future of licensing Chiropractors in Russia as well as contacts for potential institutions to partner with in respect to a future Chiropractic College there in Russia. Both of these next steps will be potentially long and tedious and will require patience, tenacity and money. Help from many will be needed in the coming stages of the expansion of Chiropractic in Russia.

It also came up in our meeting with Dr. Blinnikov that his daughter who is an MD and currently in the States, may have some interest in training as a Chiropractor. She is currently licensed as an endocrinologist in Russia.



Dr. Blinnikov looking up a contact for me in the Ministry of Health and in the Ministry of Education

Another important meeting that we had was with Yvgenie Zharkin, a specialist in PR, marketing, and identity branding. He is helping with the proper positioning of the Chiropractic profession there in Russia.



Larry Berg, Dr. Durrett, Dr. Konovalov, Yvgenie Zharkin, Demme Durrett
Meeting over dinner at our very favorite, new restaurant, Marchelli's

Also during this trip, we fit in a visit to an Orphanage in St. Petersburg. Larry Berg and his wife, Dr. Jill Howe from the Chicago area are in the process of potentially adopting a child from Russia. We were there to meet a particular child for the first time. While there we were very pleased with the loving and positive environment that we found in this particular orphanage. We had a chance to meet with the Director and she was most interested in Chiropractic services for a few of the children in the orphanage there under her charge. We are in the process of arranging for Chiropractic care for some of these children in need.



Artur, the child we were there to meet gets ready for a game of ping-pong.

One of the most fortuitous meetings that I had on my previous trip resulted in a full page article on Chiropractic being published in the Victory Magazine there in Russia. This is a beautifully done magazine that is hand delivered to all of the presidents and C.E.O.'s of companies in St. Petersburg. While I was there, the issue of the magazine with the article by Dr. Konovalov about Chiropractic was published. We had an opportunity to pick up a copy hot off the press. Dr. Konovalov has now been selected to write articles on Chiropractic and Health topics on a regular basis for this magazine. I was asked as well by the editor to submit an article that should also be published in an upcoming issue.



Dr. Durrett and Larry Berg with the Magazine and Chiropractic Article.



Victoria, editor of the Victory Magazine and Dr. Durrett

All in all Chiropractic is off to a great start in St. Petersburg. Much work is still needed to make Chiropractic a reality for the majority of Russia, but we have at least another toe-hold in the country now, with hopefully more on the way.

If you think that you would like to visit St. Petersburg this coming summer it is a wonderful time to be there. At the latter part of June, there will be a Continuing Education cruise being sponsored by Standard Process and Texas Chiropractic College. This ship will make a two day stop in St. Petersburg on June 26th and 27th.

I will not be on the cruise but will be in St. Petersburg at that time working and I am in the process of coordinating and inviting those that will be there at that time to a luncheon to honor those doctors and government officials for their efforts to make Chiropractic a reality there. We will also be organizing times that you can visit the Chiropractic office and tours of the facilities there. I anticipate some memorable professional interaction and adventure. If you are interested in visiting St. Petersburg during this time I hope you will let me know.

Also, if you have interest in being a part of this project in any way, your help is very much needed and wanted. There are many ways that you can help from small to large. Just let me know that you want to do something and we will figure out how best you can contribute. To view all the reports from the beginning of the project to current, as well as how to register to help, go to www.csintl.org/Russia.html or simply contact me at drdurrett@msn.com. Dr. Alexander Konovalov can be contacted at drkonovalov@mail.ru.