

(In September 2008 the American Chiropractic Association interviewed Dr. Saracino and published a shorter version (seen at the “Doctor’s Media” navigational link) in the Journal of the ACA.

## **Dr. Saracino’s Path to Chiropractic Neurology and the Performing Arts**

### ***Chiropractic Neurologist relies on education and professionalism.***

A curiosity about nutrition as a youngster and sports participation as a teen put Mark Saracino, DC, DACAN of King of Prussia, Pa., on the path to becoming a chiropractic neurologist. As a child, he noticed the difference that eating healthy food, back-rub exchanges with an older brother and regular sports activities made in the way he felt. This influenced his use of massage and exercise therapies in practice. Before pursuing machine technology and the beginnings of mechanical engineering he discovered the benefits of taking large dosages of vitamin C to treat and prevent colds.

He was attracted to the seemingly infinite and constant changing body-of-knowledge of the health sciences, requirement that physicians continue their education, freedom-of-expression, ability to control one’s work environment and schedule and the broad scope-of-practice chiropractic had to offer swayed his decision. He was most influenced by how effective the use of natural methods is when properly shown and described for obtaining optimal health. At the same time, he was fully aware that it might not be the easiest road to follow since, in the early Eighties, chiropractic was not fully understood and accepted in the Philadelphia Suburban Area.

### **Why did you become a chiropractor?**

After researching careers in osteopathy, medicine, physical therapy and other holistic-healthcare professions, I concluded that the only holistic AND independent profession was chiropractic. I believed it would allow for the ability to control one’s destiny and maintain a healthy life-style.

### **Why did you choose to go to National University of the Health Sciences?**

I knew there was skepticism about chiropractic in the public and medical community, so I chose National because it was the best and most highly regarded school of Chiropractic Medicine. National requires that each doctoral candidate complete a four-year premedical curriculum and five years of professional studies, including internship. It was the first chiropractic school to be; regionally and chiropractic specific accredited; require a four-year prerequisite; have a five-year term; and the first of its kind to have an on-campus chiropractic hospital and publish a scientifically-indexed journal. It was also the first chiropractic college to obtain university status so, I thought, it would be the best school to prepare me to serve patients and answer difficult questions about chiropractic.

### **Then you studied neurology. Why?**

I wanted to learn more about neurology because it was one of the most difficult and fascinating subjects in professional school. I was happy that, in 1979, the first courses in clinical neurology were offered not far from where I live. Chiropractic Neurology is a rare and exclusive post-doctoral sub-specialty degree in chiropractic which requires a three year term, board examination and 30 continuing education credits a year. I hope others in chiropractic pursue advanced degrees because it will better legitimize chiropractic. The ability to provide a broader range-of-care than regular chiropractic is challenging and rewarding.

**You've treated many actors and dancers over the years. How so?**

My office is adjacent to a hotel which had a dinner theater. It was only natural that some of the performers would find their way to me being right next door. One dancer suggested I help-out at a ballet studio a few towns away and I wound up serving as a board member for 18 years. Then, word got out that I was the 'go-to' chiropractor for the arts community. This experience allowed me to learn quite a bit about treating performing arts injuries. A few years later I delivered lectures to performing arts companies world-wide.

**Dancers in particular must benefit from your care.**

Dance is a small and under-funded sub-sector of the performing arts industry in America. They struggle financially and are frequently not capable of receiving the best care for their injuries. They need a lot of guidance and treatment, because their classes and rehearsals, like athletic work-outs and practices, are punishing. Most through the mid-Nineties were covered under mandatory workers' compensation policies even though they were employed out-of-state. Then, most dancers were forced to sign 'independent contractor' statements although they were not self-employed 'independent contractors'. This allowed their employers to not list them as employees; hence their ability to receive worker's compensation insurance policies was eliminated. Being low pay-scale performers they did not have the money to pay for their own insurance and could not afford to receive treatments as often as necessary. It's amazing how dedicated they are in spite of these struggles.

**Do you have any memorable moments working with the performing arts?**

Oh, yes! I was invited to lecture on the prevention of and home treatment for performing arts injuries to Russian companies Bolshoi Ballet and Taganka Theater in Moscow and the State Ballet Theater in Yekaterinburg (near Siberia). I was given this opportunity by Ilse Liepa, a principle of the Bolshoi, whom I met while performing in Wilmington, Delaware. I was honored to speak to the Bolshoi dancers, the finest in the World, attending rehearsals and performances. Also, enlightening was helping-out in Italy during the Parsons Dance Company's (a New York modern dance troupe) European tour. Feeling the excitement of the Italians for an art-form relatively new to them was exciting. I felt proud to support modern dance because it is what many consider to be a truly American art-form in such a traditional society.

**Were the Russians familiar with chiropractic?**

Not as we know it. The Russian equivalent is a minimal, not respected and utilized form of chiropractic known as “manual medicine”. In general, the performers in Former Eastern Block Nations are supported well by their government and treated much better than performing artists here. They are granted access to the finest physicians and procedures. Conversely, the mostly impoverished general public has access to a poor health care system. This forced many to create their own holistic concoctions out-of-necessity.