



WCCS

World Congress of Chiropractic Students

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Finding your own way

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Exposition

As a fourth year chiropractic student in Canada, at *Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières* (UQTR), 'Fake it till you make it' is probably one of the sayings I have heard the most. I remember feeling confused when lecturers mentioned this at the beginning of my chiropractic student career.

Four years later, I think I finally understand its true meaning. I started at our student clinic in September of this year and although I have 3 years of theoretical knowledge and technical practice to my name, I still lack the true clinical experience that our lecturers possess. When it comes to treating our first patients, we aren't always confident in what we are doing so we unconsciously apply this concept.

Like many, at some point in my student journey, I experienced 'imposter syndrome'. This phenomenon encompasses feelings of self-doubt and the belief of being incapable, despite one being competent. Basically you feel like an imposter, tricking everyone, including yourself. I truly wondered why I was feeling this way. My rational brain knew that I had worked so hard in my studies. I thought I was the only one experiencing these feelings, but I soon came to the realisation that many of my colleagues were feeling the same way. Interestingly, a clinical study of imposter syndrome was done among the US chiropractic students at Palmer College of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa, and San Jose, California. It concluded that one third ($\frac{1}{3}$) of the students matched the criteria defined as Imposter Syndrome. (1) Other studies have shown that multiple other healthcare students (medicine (2), nursing, etc(1)) experience this phenomenon as well, so it is much more common than we may think.

Our main tool as a chiropractor is spinal manipulative therapy (SMT) or 'adjustments' applied using our hands. Since the second year of my doctorate, SMT is a skill that I have started to develop and that I use everyday at the student clinic to treat my patients. It's a tool that requires high velocity and low amplitude applied in a specific direction and with intent. When you look at

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it closely, it's like learning a new sport or any other skill. At first, it's normal to be a bit clumsy and then with practice, you become better and improve. I believe this is one of the main reasons why chiropractic students feel unskilled and why we apply the '*fake it till you make it*' concept and experience '*imposter syndrome*' so readily, although we are more than capable of treating and taking care of our patients.

When you begin your chiropractic studies, you learn quite quickly that the chiropractic profession is one where you can create your own style of practice. Not only will you develop preferences for specific genres of treatments such as pregnancy, paediatrics, geriatrics, etc, but you are also exposed to the wide diversity of the profession and different terms like '*evidence-based practice*', '*mixer*', '*vitalist*'.

On one hand, the diversity of our profession allows us many opportunities to learn but on the other hand, it's easy to get lost in the fog and confused. So how do we as students find our way?

If you really want to discover the kind of chiropractor you want to be, I believe it's important to expose yourself to as many experiences as possible, get involved with organisations or groups like the WCCS, reach out to the people that drive you and motivate you and importantly ask as many questions as you can. The chiropractic program is challenging and hard but in the end, it is definitely worth it. The kind of practice you think you will have is not always the one you will eventually have. Over the term of your study, your way of thinking changes, as well as your priorities and values. Through every interaction, every discussion, every experience, it makes you evolve as a chiropractor.

This is why being a member of the *World Congress of Chiropractic Students* (WCCS) has made such a huge impact on me and my student experience. It has allowed me to have many opportunities to travel, discuss and to share my chiropractic journey with other students internationally. I have found that it does not matter where you come from, what kind of techniques you use, or what chiropractic philosophy you align with, sharing with chiropractic students around the world makes you realise that we are all a part of something bigger than ourselves. The WCCS definitely helps students build their chiropractic identity and I am proud to be a part of this student-led organisation.

Therefore, as a student, my sense of '*fake it till you make it*' is not about tricking people into believing I'm capable, but it is having enough confidence in the treatments I provide to my patients and knowing I will help them to get better, even if I do not have a lot of clinical experience. We all start somewhere. Let's start by believing in ourselves.

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Note

All contributions from the WCCS are gathered at apcj.net/WCCS