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### PREVENTION AND REHABILITATION: EDITORIAL

## Leon Chaitow's legacy, a 'light upon paths'



**Photo 1.** Craig Liebenson with Leon Chaitow (right), 1987.

Exactly 10 years on from the first appearance of the Prevention and Rehabilitation Section in the Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies (JBMT), this January 2019 editorial marks the significant contribution of Leon Chaitow.

Last September, when the founding Editor-in-Chief of the JBMT, Leon Chaitow, succumbed to illness, the news of his passing came as a shock to many. This is because it was an impression of a significant vitality that his presence evoked in those he met, taught or worked with. This powerful trait was expressed by his prodigious work-rate, breadth of knowledge, scientific veracity, and an unstoppable need to disseminate current thinking in the health sciences.

Leon Chaitow was extremely passionate about his vocation, working nearly to the end, making sure he completed his last text book, 'Fascial Dysfunction' 2nd Edition (Handspring) published in November 2018, and, importantly, ensuring the JBMT's future (Chaitow, S. 2018).

It is no accident that when Chaitow was creating the then-new 'Prevention and Rehabilitation' section for the JBMT (designed to fulfill the perceived need for the JBMT to provide practical information for direct application within a clinical environment, whatever that could be interpreted as being), he chose a Chiropractor, an Osteopath/Naturopath, and a Physiotherapist to be the Associate Editors and regular contributors. In an early Editorial entitled 'Preconceptions and prejudices', Chaitow (1997) neatly described stereotypes of these professions and that of Massage Therapists. He then went through and lightly demolished the received ideas and praised the changes within the professions that were marking their development and progress. He stated in the editorial's conclusion 'that it is now difficult when watching a *physical therapist*, an *osteopath*<sup>1</sup> and a chiropractor working, to know to which profession they belong.'

<sup>1</sup> Italics denote a subtle change to the quote for clarity.

Today, when reviewing the 10 years of the JBMT's Prevention and Rehabilitation section, it is often difficult to know the base discipline of the contributor, as ideas are not owned by one profession, and sharing knowledge between the disciplines has only benefited all.

Chaitow's inclusivity, his championing of the role of the manual or movement therapist, his belief that there is good science behind and alongside the art of the allied musculoskeletal, movement, or complementary professions, marks Chaitow's valuable contribution to the convergence of ideas across these disciplines.

The choice of the title of this journal written for those who work on or with the human body and those that use movement as their tool seems to mean more now than perhaps it did when its first edition appeared over 20 years ago. The refusal to name even a single discipline as a key audience in the title of the JBMT is its strength. The Journal, therefore, attracts a broad readership and diversity in a contributor's base training. And it will continue to do so.

The proliferating numbers of research pieces on Pilates, massage, yoga, or even on fascial science, amongst others, has meant the journal has increased in the number of pages it now publishes. The increase in research in areas untouched two decades ago is at least partially a result of Chaitow's belief in the need for research and its dissemination of the science behind these sometimes disparate and often under-verified professions.

There are many textbooks to Chaitow's credit, too many to list here, but it is likely that the living organism that is this Journal, the JBMT, will prove to be the lasting legacy of Leon Chaitow's professional work.

Unfortunately textbooks, by definition, date, as they are a snapshot of knowledge up to the moment of their publication. The form of the journal, however, as a medium of scientific dissemination, continually publishing the latest research and ideas, will never cease to be current.

"So when a great man dies,

For years beyond our ken,

The light he leaves behind him lies

Upon the paths of men."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The path the JBMT has become, for many of us, is a truly fitting memorial to Leon Chaitow's passionate and outstanding life's work, freely given.

Personal comments from JBMT Associate Editors

'Wandering a spiritual bookstore - The Bodhi Tree - in Los Angeles in 1983 I happened upon a book with a bright blue cover with the irresistible title *Neuro-Muscular Technique*. Describing Russian science on the effects of stress while integrating osteopathic, chiropractic & naturopathic soft tissue methods, I was immediately reeled in. He even mentioned an obscure technique "muscle energy procedures" which set me on a journey I'm still on today to discover behavioural nudges to inspire a lifestyle of sustainable activity in my patients. The thing about Leon was that you were with him as he sought to integrate isolated "systems" in an efficient systematic way. His humble, warrior spirit of seeking pearls of wisdom contained in isolated silos and then showing how they could be used as part of a broad non-dogmatic, person-centered approach inspired my career path to this day.'

C.L.

'Leon and I were unable to spend much time together, but I learned disproportionately more from him than our contact would suggest. My experience will be similar to the many others he asked to contribute to his book or journal projects. His turnaround with corrections and directions on my submissions to him was legendary. Even though Corfu is 2 hours ahead of London, Leon clearly did not need sleep and his replies were usually back in my inbox well before my early morning alarm would sound. His skillful light touch as an editor could transform a piece from a dense block of words into a readable and hopefully engaging work. But my enduring memory of Leon will be the nervous wait for his approval following submission. This was an important part of the editorial process and his praise, not ever given lightly or indeed with every submission, proved to be the most rewarding part of writing for him. Writing for Leon has been a privilege.'

W.M.

"My earliest memories of Leon are not actually of Leon at all, but of his living legend-like status in our profession. Training as an osteopath & naturopath in the mid-1990's, I saw books dotted all around the college library by the elusive, yet pervasive, Leon Chaitow - on topics as diverse as Palpatory Literacy, Candida, Hydrotherapy, Vaccination, and the Stone-Age Diet. Always fascinating, always informative.

It was with the release of the *Journal of Bodywork & Movement Therapies* (released around the same time as 3 more highly acclaimed books on *Neuromuscular Techniques*, *Positional Release Techniques*, and *Muscle-Energy Techniques*) that Leon's integrative vision really became clear to me. Within this new journal, Leon had brought together some of the brightest minds in our field and had constructed a journal format of great clinical applicability and satiety; in contrast to most of the often dry, largely indigestible journals available at that time. Although we had "virtually" crossed paths, it wasn't until 2006 that I stepped into a formal working relationship with Leon and began to realise just why he had this reputation that preceded him and uncanny level of productivity.

It was late on Christmas Eve 2006 when I submitted my chapter to Leon for his textbook "*Naturopathic Physical Medicine*". A 110-page Word document, I expected to have at least a week or two's sojourn from the writing process over the festivities. I awoke Christmas morning and there it was in my inbox, freshly delivered, as if by Santa himself, a fully edited chapter with the ball back in my court to continue the process. I was flabbergasted!

In 2009 I was invited, with Warrick McNeill, to co-edit the new *Rehabilitation & Prevention* section of JBMT and it sounds like Warrick and I trod a similar path from there - what he writes in his dedication to Leon sounds almost identical to my own experience; and a relationship I will be eternally grateful for. Thank you for everything you did for our professions, our patients and the world Leon, now time to rest'.

M.W.

## References

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