

2008 McKenzie Conference Of The Americas - Review

Contributed by Allan Besselink, PT, Dip.MDT
Monday, 06 October 2008
Last Updated Monday, 06 October 2008

At the end of July, I attended the McKenzie Conference of the Americas in Orlando, Florida. Though Orlando doesn't rate very highly on my short list of conference locales, the conference itself was well worth the time in the Land of Mickey. And though it may seem that a report of this is a little bit of "old news", I still think it's important to bring this to the attention of both clinicians and patients alike.

The McKenzie Institute conference has a rotating schedule. In alternate years, it is an International conference which moves throughout the global regions that have branches of the McKenzie Institute. On alternate years, the conference is a regional one - for example, our region being the Americas. I've been able to attend all of the North American/Americas McKenzie conferences since 1994 (8), and about half of the international conferences (3) . After my first McKenzie conference in La Jolla, I came to the realization that the McKenzie Institute are committed to excellence in conference programming. Through the amazing work of Ann Carlton and the U.S. office, we have continually been provided with exemplary conference speakers and workshops.

There are a couple of aspects of the McKenzie conferences that have always struck me as important. The first is that the speakers have been incredible. They are always individuals that are actively involved in either research or clinical involvement, and the information presented is current. Yes, current. That is a novelty in the world of conferences these days. I've been to far too many conferences and course that were out of touch with the issues that truly impact our profession. More often than not, the literature presented is current and relevant to clinical practice - if not truly cutting-edge.

But it's not only McKenzie research - and this is the second most important aspect. The McKenzie Institute welcomes researchers that are committed to clinically relevant material, even those that may have a viewpoint counter to the McKenzie method. I've certainly seen my share of healthy discussions and debates in sessions at past McKenzie conferences. Instead of shying away from the issues, I've watched the issues come front and center and be debated for the benefit of our collective thinking and the benefit of the patients we treat. This is a tremendous way to grow as a clinician - when exposed to a healthy environment in which to debate issues of clinical relevance among physicians, physical therapists, and chiropractors committed to the concept of self care.

This year was no different than past years - and perhaps even better. The speakers were outstanding. I would strongly urge clinicians to examine the work of Drs. Karim Khan and Lorimer Moseley. The topics? Khan's research is focused on understanding mechanotransduction - the cellular process that allows tissues to adapt and respond to imposed demands. Moseley's work is on the central nervous system and, most recently, pain. Both were very humorous but at the same time, very clinically relevant. Though neither would call themselves well-versed in the McKenzie method, they both expressed an excitement that their research fit nicely into the concepts espoused by McKenzie. Add to this presentations from McKenzie faculty like Audrey Long and you have the basis for a fantastic conference for virtually any clinician to attend. Even if you aren't trained in the McKenzie method, you would be exposed to a great deal of valuable information in an environment in which you can discuss it openly.

I also need to make note of another significant event at this year's conference. Ann Carlton, the long-time conference organizer and conference "mom", has decided to retire. Ann has always been a person to be open and welcoming to anyone, and her spirit and presence at the Conference is something that I have always appreciated and come to look forward to year in and year out. Many will miss her presence and warmth. Ann, thanks so much for all you've done and in providing a warm environment in which learning becomes so much easier and developing great friendships becomes so much more natural. Your ability to put everyone at ease and continue to assist in providing great programming will be sadly missed.