

**Dr. Cristina Leonardelli**

**Dr. Scott Howitt**

**Dr. Lara deGraauw**

**Dr. Gordon Lawson Research Funding Grant - A survey of Canada-based sport chiropractors' attitudes, beliefs, and practical application of sport psychology in the rehabilitation process**

**Abstract**

Injured athletes often consult with sports injury rehabilitation professionals (SIRPs) such as physiotherapists, athletic therapists, and sport specialist chiropractors, to help them return to sport. Thus, it is prudent for SIRPs to have a good understanding of both the physical and psychological responses to sport injury, as well as the ability to provide effective psychological interventions to optimize the recovery process. Sports specialist chiropractors are emerging as leaders in the sport medicine community and work closely with injured athletes on their rehabilitation and recovery.

Competencies for many governing bodies of SIRPs, including the Royal College of Chiropractic Sport Specialists (RCCSS(C)) call for a baseline level of knowledge and ability in psychosocial factors of healthcare. In practice, however, SIRPs may not feel confident in their knowledge and/or ability to deliver such interventions. Previous research has examined the attitudes, beliefs, and confidence of athletic therapists and physiotherapists in the United States and United Kingdom,<sup>1–5</sup> however there is currently no data available on Canadian sports specialist chiropractors.

The objective of this mixed-methods study is to survey Canadian sports chiropractors to better understand their attitudes, beliefs, and confidence surrounding the use of principles and practice of sport psychology interventions during the sport injury rehabilitation process, as well as their education and training in sports psychology and referral practices. The quantitative portion of the study involves an 11-item questionnaire. The qualitative portion of the study involves semi-structured interviews with sport specialist chiropractors. This research will hopefully guide future research into education interventions to help with knowledge translation and practical application of skills in this population.

*Dr. Cristina Leonardelli is currently a resident of the Royal College of Chiropractic Sports Sciences Canada (RCCSS(C)). She earned her Bachelor of Science Kinesiology degree from McMaster University, where she captained the varsity soccer team. She then graduated magna cum laude from the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College in 2017, and went on to complete her Masters in Human Kinetics with a focus in applied sport psychology from the University of Ottawa in 2018.*

*Dr. Leonardelli has worked in private practice as a chiropractor and mental performance consultant in Ottawa since 2017. She has been involved in various levels of sport from the grassroots level to the international stage, including as a team chiropractor of the CFL's Ottawa Redblacks since the 2018 season. She was also the lead therapist for Atletico Ottawa of the Canadian Premier League (CPL) during their inaugural season in 2020, and worked as a team therapist with the Canadian Women's National Soccer Team at the SheBelieves Cup in 2021.*



*Dr. Leonardelli believes that sports chiropractic research is critical to keeping sports chiropractors informed of the latest advancements in supporting athletes toward optimal performance. Sports Chiropractic research in a variety of domains, such as biomechanics, rehabilitation, injury prevention, nutrition, and psychology, provide a holistic approach to evidence-informed practice. Continuing to advance this research is especially important as sports specialist chiropractors position themselves as integral members of every athlete's healthcare team.*