



Becoming a chiropractor offers a long and rewarding patient-centred profession. We caught up with Dr Maliheh G Zahedi, one of the first women to graduate from the AECC University College, who shares some of her special memories from a lifelong career.

"My parents always wanted me to be educated in England and that's why originally, I came here from Persia. I began attending a boarding school on the Isle of Wight and being the eldest of five children, my sisters came later to England, following me. As sisters, we didn't live together, instead we all went to different English families so that we could improve our English.



How did you discover chiropractic originally and what led you to this profession?

"No one in my family studied chiropractic. I was introduced to the profession by Mr. and Mrs. Donald Bennett (who were vital to the venture of setting up the AECC) and we had become friends. They were the couple that introduced me to chiropractic. Originally, I had come to England to learn English and was preparing to go to university to study medicine. I did not know what chiropractic was, they talked about the Anglo-European College of Chiropractic (AECC) and said with my qualifications I could come to the college and start studying. I asked, what does a chiropractor do? They explained, you don't give medication, you treat the patients by yourself. You are not dependent on anything, just you and your knowledge and your hands. "I became interested in doing this course and because the college was private back then, you had to pay to study there.

"I remember my parents saying that chiropractic is not recognised in Iran yet, although they knew it was practiced in America. However, my husband reassured me saying I should go ahead and not to worry as everything could change, and it did change, and chiropractic became more mainstream."

Studying at the AECC

"I attended classes at the original location of AECC in Cavendish Road in Bournemouth. Of course, they later moved to the bigger site in Parkwood Road.

"There were ten of us in total – most of whom were from France, and a couple from England. A lady called Francoise, and I, were the first two women to study chiropractic in the UK at the AECC."

You were one of the first woman chiropractors to graduate from AECC. What was it like?

"It was incredibly challenging; I challenged the boys. Being a woman, you had to, because I had to show them that I was not behind, that I was equal. And I did, I never had any failures in any subject and always at the top – a great personal achievement for me!

"After graduating I remember one of the other students stayed locally in Bournemouth. Another went to New Zealand, one to South Africa and the French all went back to France. It was a happy time. Happiness from the beginning!"

How long did you study for?

"I studied for four years at the AECC, starting in 1966. If you wanted to specialise in different areas like sport, paediatric, or other different specialisms, you could do that. I went to many seminars and classes for feet, hands, spine, especially more specific areas. I have carried out lots of courses, it's so important that you keep learning. I never stopped. I enjoyed all my time at AECC from the beginning until the end. I chose what I wanted to study, chiropractic, and learnt this profession."

What year did you graduate from AECC?

"I graduated in 1970

"I married my Persian husband, and my daughter Rayhaneh was born in England. We settled down here in the UK, as in Persia they didn't know about chiropractic, and I wanted to go into practice."

Alumni | Chiropractic Profile



Here's the Class of 1970 Graduation photo (Maliheh G Zahedi (nee Baigi) is seated bottom right)

What did you do after you graduated?

"After graduating I went to look at different chiropractic clinics to see how they were run. I went to Southampton to see Doctor Hall, to see George Walker in Plymouth – he was a great chiropractor. Also, Steve William, whose practice was in Southampton – Steve specialised in paediatric.

"I just wanted to see different people with different approaches, some had x-ray facilities in their clinics.

"I then went on to set up a private clinic. All the facilities bought were of the best quality. My chiropractic bench was built for me because I was short. I did not like to have one too high.

"I would meet with patients, ask them to sit down, or lie down – I showed them the way, guiding their positions. I also advised on exercise or diet if they needed. We all know obesity is not good for you, or for your heart. I showed them how to do exercises and the importance of doing it. I would try and help them, and always encourage them to keep going."

What sort of patients or injuries did you typically treat?

"Typically, sports injuries, headaches, different joints pain, spine, often different patients, athletes, footballers, weightlifters, famous people!

"I always asked if they had pain and I would then watch them walk – I knew where it ached because of watching the way that they moved. I would put my finger on the painful area and they say, "you are small, but your fingers are like iron!" I really enjoyed working with patients.

"I worked helping many patients, thousands, tens of thousands. We knew this because of the numbered medical records we took."

Did you have any working partnerships you could share details of with us?

"I worked as the AFC Bournemouth Chiropractor in 1986-88, for two years, treating the team.

"Brian Tiller was the manager of AFC Bournemouth and Harry Redknapp was the coach, both of them were excellent. They were always in our clinic visiting and coming for treatment. This is me with Harry Redknapp outside the clinic on the 6th May 1987. Sadly, the manager, Brian Tiller (also in this photo), was killed in a car accident in Italy after a friendly football game with Italy.

"I also worked with the West Hants Club, a premier rackets and fitness club."

Alumni | Chiropractic Profile



Here I am photographed with Harry Redknapp and Brian Tiller in 1987. There's also me in my treatment room today

You came back to teach at Parkwood Road Campus?

"Being a chiropractor is the sort of job that you can keep doing, you can still work and have a family.

"In fact, my daughter went to school at St Thomas Garnet, across the road from the AECC campus and I called the AECC to ask if I could come back and work teaching chiropractic to students. Also working at the AECC at the time was John Clark, the top medical consultant in the area, who would talk to our students as well as medical students about chiropractic.

"I remember introducing Dr Eldars, a Neurologist, to the college as he was our friend. As part of the course students needed to study neurology. Dr Eldars said, "they have to study, so let me be their teacher, I'll teach them all that they need to know. He was good, and very thorough, and taught at the AECC for many years. As did I for a few years, and I really enjoyed teaching; I loved it."

Do you keep in touch with your cohort group?

"Some of them did used to meet up but I was not the type to socialise outside, but when they came to the college or there was an alumni event, I would always come to see them there. Also, at seminars which I always attended."

What's been your best moment of your career?

"My Graduation because it enabled me to be a chiropractor, I loved it, I practiced every day. Plus, the changes that I made to patients' lives."

How long were you practicing for?

"I had a private practice in Bournemouth for nearly 50-years. When I decided to retire, I was sad, as it was hard for me to announce this. Patients bring so much into your life and you are so much of their lives. I was tired and I needed to think of my family – I wanted to spend time with my grandsons."

What advice would you give to a young woman who was thinking about studying chiropractic?

"It's the best thing that you could do – if you like to help people with their health, that's chiropractic. As simple as that. The best profession. It's only you who practices and you can be your own boss – you work when you like."

What is the most rewarding thing about your work?

"When the patient comes back and says that they are better and no longer in pain.

"I still see some of my patients out and about, in Bournemouth. They call my name and talk to me, they say, "you don't remember me?!" and I tell them, I remember all my patients' faces. All of them, some of them by name. They say you remember us? Yes, of course, I remember you!"

What was your fondest memory about the AECC?

"The Graduation was always the best memory for me."