Mindy Mar
D.C., C.C.S.P.®
Mindy Mar D.C., C.C.S.P.® has been the team and game-day treating doctor for the San Diego Charger Girls since 2007 and is recognized as the first female Chiropractor in the NFL. Dr. Mar shares how she helps not just athletes, but people of all ages to become healthier, stronger and feel better on a daily basis.

NC: What or who inspired you to become a Chiropractor specializing in Sports Medicine?

DM: After graduating from Arizona State University with a degree in Exercise Science (concentration on athletic training), I had completed numerous internships, mostly at physical therapy offices. But I knew that I wanted something more diverse. Despite ASU’s Exercise Science department being ranked number one during my senior year, I received no education or information specifically on chiropractic nor had I ever been to a chiropractor. I decided to cold call around Scottsdale to see if any chiropractors were looking for assistance, and after my interview at the Palmer Center for Natural Healing, I was brought on as Dr. Alan Palmer’s chiropractic assistant. Dr. Palmer is the team chiropractor for the Arizona Diamondbacks and the Phoenix Coyotes. He was my first and original mentor and I worked for him for 2 ½ years prior to starting chiropractic school. My valuable time with him, along with my student internship at the ASU Sports Medicine Dept in Fall ’96 (ASU Football team’s Cinderella season, Rose Bowl bound) was the catalyst for what inspired me to follow the path of sports medicine and chiropractic.

NC: Pursuing a doctorate degree is a big commitment. Could you share a struggle or setback you encountered and overcame during this time?

DM: You learn how to refine your time management skills. Time spent in labs, studying for multiple board exams and working on research projects must become the priority. Personal relationships and outside work commitments can become strained if you are putting your all into your studies and program. It becomes almost an art form learning how to balance time for your family and friends, not to mention taking time for your self. You realize when you’re going through a doctorate or diplomat program whether or not this is your true calling in life. If it is, you find a way to balance and prioritize.

NC: Describe a typical NFL game day for you as the Charger Girls’ treating doctor.

DM: I arrive on-site four hours prior to the game with two big sideline/medical bags. I set up my treatment room and work with my female athletes who are in need. Various modes of treatments and therapies are available on game day including chiropractic adjustments, ultrasound and various tapes. I am prepared for physical, orthopedic and neurologic evaluations, should there be a need for such examinations on game day. I work with the squad prior to kick off, during halftime and after the game.

“The Doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will educate his patients in the care of the human frame, in diet, and in the cause and prevention of disease.” - Thomas A. Edison
NC: You are a partner in a busy healthcare practice, San Diego Center for Health. What types of services do you provide?

DM: My partner, Dr. Rumel Llantada and I have been in private practice since 2003 with two locations in San Diego. We utilize a science and literature based approach with chiropractic care, which treats the body as a whole through functional assessment, chiropractic adjustments, soft tissue mobilization and exercise rehabilitation. Professional services include chiropractic adjustments, spinal decompression, Graston Technique®, Endermologie®, various taping including athletic, leukotape and kinesio-tape®, physiotherapy modalities, exercise rehabilitation, physical exams, pre-participation sports physicals, digital imaging, NCV/EMG testing and custom orthotics.

NC: What are some of the benefits of chiropractic care? Why is it beneficial for the dance team to have their game-day treating doctor be a Doctor of Chiropractic as opposed to an M.D. or D.O.?

DM: The majority of professional athletes nowadays seek chiropractic and chiropractors more often than MDs or DO’s initially because chiropractors utilize a manual or physical approach to healthcare. Most athletes are looking to avoid medication and surgery at all costs. Athletes also tend to be more mindful of injury prevention protocol versus treatment upon injury. Chiropractic care is ideal for both injury prevention and injury treatment with repetitive stress and biomechanical deficiencies in mind. Chiropractic is also sought after for optimal performance with agility, power and speed in mind. Chiropractors look at the body from a three dimensional standpoint and incorporate adjustments for joint realignment and mobilization, soft tissue therapy for scar tissue breakdown/healing and exercise rehabilitation for stability and strength. MDs and DO’s play a key role in sports medicine with blunt force trauma, infections, or injuries that do require medical/surgical intervention such as lacerations or organ failure.
NC: Aside from pain, what other less obvious symptoms or signals do our bodies give us to let us know it may be wise to seek medical attention?

DM: Fatigue, lack of concentration, tingling and/or numbness felt in arms or legs, not digesting food well or not going to the bathroom regularly are all indications that one or more systems in our body is not performing functionally well.

Treating the site of pain or injury is very important, but it is also necessary to do detective work in determining why a problem becomes chronic, if indeed it is a recurring injury. It is important to determine the cause of the problem and simply not mask the signs or symptoms with drugs or over the counter medications. The person as a whole must also be thoroughly examined to determine if an area of weakness or pain is originating from another anatomical region is due to compensation or biomechanical defaults. We function as a whole so it makes sense to evaluate and treat as a whole. It is also important to think of the human body as one organism that has many systems in charge of their own individualized function but at the same time are all dependent on each system for optimal performance starting on a cellular level.

NC: What are the most common sports injuries you see? Other than impact/contact injuries, are many of problems you treat preventable?

DM: Injury prevention is the key to keeping any athlete or team healthy enough to meet the physical demands of their sport. Common sports injuries often involve the bones and soft tissue of the extremities such as shoulders, elbows, wrists, hips, knees and ankles. Proper hydration, dietary needs for one’s particular sport or body type, warm up/cool down, exercise rehab for biomechanical reinforcement and specific adaptation to imposed demands when it comes to one’s strength and conditioning training are all key components for injury prevention.

NC: Describe some small changes that most of us could make to improve our overall wellness.

DM: Drink more water! Minimum should be half of one’s body weight in ounces. It’s important to keep inflammation levels to a minimum in our bodies so regular omega-3 rich foods (or supplements) helps along with proper hydration and occasional espom salt baths. Supplementation is important but must be advised on an individual basis. Vitamin D is very important so I’m a fan of 15-20 minutes of sunshine per day or by means of diet/supplementation if necessary. Magnesium is also a very important mineral that many of us are deficient in. Motion and movement are key for our bodies to stay strong and healthy otherwise early degeneration is likely to set in. Joint and soft tissue health is crucial in order to maintain daily activities, athletics and recreational activities for all ages.

NC: What at-home stretches, breathing techniques or warm-up exercises could you suggest for students to have safer, healthier workouts?

DM: It is so important to take the time to warm up for 10-15 minutes prior to cardio and/or strength and conditioning. The more blood flow in the joints and soft tissue the less chance of experiencing a sprain/strain type of injury. It is also important to perform the majority of stretches after a workout while the body is warm. Stretching cold, shortened tissue can increase chances for tears and injury. It is important to keep in mind that the back should be 2-3 times stronger than the chest. This is often the reverse especially in younger males. This discrepancy often leads to shoulder impingement, rotator cuff injuries and sometimes labrum tears. Squatting with too much weight is almost a guaranteed way to cause injury to knees with ligaments and meniscus in mind. I’m a big advocate of Pilates training... it’s my chosen method for exercise rehabilitation and strength training. Heavy weight is not necessary to define and sculpt one’s physique.
NC: Are more health insurance plans covering chiropractic care?

DM: Most, if not all, insurance plans offer chiropractic coverage as chiropractic care has become more mainstream in the past 20 years or so. Strong clinical research and studies in the field of chiropractic over the past 20-30 years have demonstrated the effectiveness and cost saving benefits of chiropractic. Therefore, more coverage for chiropractic and wellness care is provided by employers and insurance companies now more so than ever.

NC: You are also involved in animal rescue and rehabilitation through the M.A.R. Foundation (Mar Animal Rescue.) Tell me about your mission to help animals.

DM: The M.A.R. (Mar Animal Rescue) Foundation is a future foundation I plan to establish with the goal being to raise funds to assist existing rescue sanctuaries and legal defense for animal rights.

NC: When the rest of your day is cleared, what would we find you doing?

DM: Relaxing at home with my three cats.

Dr. Mar received her Bachelor of Science degree from Arizona State University in 1997 and her Doctorate degree from Southern California University School of Health Sciences in 2002. She is a Board Certified Chiropractor, and recognized as a nationally certified Chiropractic Sports Physician®. Dr. Mar is currently enrolled in the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians post-doctoral program to receive her Diplomate in Sports Medicine.