

Emperor's College: Celebrating 20 Years of Leadership

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID SOLIN LEE AND LIZ HOFFMANN, PART TWO

Editorial Staff

Founded in 1983 by Dr. Bong Dal Kim, OMD, LAc, Emperor's College of Traditional Oriental Medicine celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. In recognition of the anniversary, *Acupuncture Today* interviewed David Solin Lee, Emperor's chief executive officer, and Liz Hoffmann, the school's director of institutional communications, to discuss the challenges Emperor's has faced over the past 20 years, and to gain some insight into their vision of the school's future.

The following is a continuation of *AT*'s interview with Mr. Lee and Ms. Hoffman, the first part of which appeared in the May issue.

Acupuncture Today (AT): The past 20 years at Emperor's has been very dynamic. What else do you see happening over the next 20 years?

David Solin Lee (DSL): We still have to approach things a step at a time. The next two steps are continuing to improve the master's program and launching the doctoral program. In the master's program, faculty development is our current area of focus. It is an important part of our mission statement, and we're excited about the significant developments that are occurring in medical education.

AT: How will those developments affect what's going on at the school?

DSL: During the past two years, the standards for regional accreditation and Western medical education have been revised. There is a greater focus on student outcomes and competency-based education. We've started a faculty development fellowship under Will Morris. Dr. Morris is the academic dean at Emperor's, and a frequent contributor to *Acupuncture Today*. He is also completing a master's program in medical education at USC. The focus of the program is to train medical practitioners in the most current methods that have been proven effective in teaching medicine. He is the first acupuncturist to ever be accepted into the program.

Liz Hoffmann (LH): Emperor's has a great faculty. We've got the full range, from esoteric teachers to old-school Chinese herb instructors, but we know that teaching and learning are not static. There are always better ways to present information that work as the times change. People learn differently here and now than they did 20 years ago in California or China. It's great that we can adapt to the times while presenting this ancient medicine.

AT: Is there a lot of support for developing the faculty?

DSL: The experience and skills of the professors make a huge difference. All of our professors are accomplished practitioners, and giving them this extra level of support makes all the difference.

AT: I'd like to switch gears for a moment and talk about the profession at large. There seems to be

some instability with some schools these days; a few have closed, and others are experiencing difficulties. What has enabled Emperor's to grow during that time?

DSL: The students here always seem to be talking and interacting with each other. I mentioned earlier that we have a bi-annual retreat to Big Bear, but that's just a jump-start. For our community to prosper, we try to make this environment as lively as possible. Our student council offers free herbal, needling techniques, and point location tutorials. They also organize an annual ski trip to Mammoth Mountain. We also have a range of elective classes taught by legends like Mikio Sankey and Ron Teegarden.

LH: I've attended extracurricular classes in yoga, meditation and *qigong*, and seen special guest speakers on *tai ji quan*, different styles of *qigong* and even Buddhist monks. This school is unusual in how far beyond the curriculum the activities stretch. Even one of our associate deans teaches a Chinese fencing class. There's always something going on. Also, one of the best things about the administration at Emperor's is their availability. Very rarely do you see a closed door, and even if one is closed, somebody's always around to answer your questions. It's nice to know there is somewhere to turn.

AT: Do you think offering so many activities can distract the students from their work?

LH: I don't think so. Personally, I like the variety. Sometimes I'm here all day and so I welcome the break. It's a breath of fresh air that adds to my depth of understanding of medicine, healing and what Dr. Kim calls "the superior doctor."

DSL: This medicine can be approached from many different angles. We want to open hearts and open minds. We encourage and have implemented tools for communication because that's how you build trust. Once people of similar beliefs get together, some amazing things happen. It all comes back to our mission statement. And through the doctoral program, we hope to be able to explore with much greater depth and innovation.

AT: About the doctoral program: what makes it different, or unique, from the ones being offered at other schools?

DSL: One of the most innovative elements in our doctoral program will be the ongoing creation of doctoral portfolios. The portfolio is a collection of physical pieces of evidence and reflections used to illustrate learnings and best works. Documents will range from extended case studies and group research projects to new works that express original insights about the medicine. The defense of the doctoral portfolio will be the culminating event of the doctoral program and require graduates to demonstrate attainment of the program purpose and each of the doctoral objectives. They will be able to graduate with a collection of professional, publication-quality products that should propel their leadership in the field.

AT: Are doctoral programs the way of the future, and how are they going to affect the profession?

DSL: This is obviously a complicated question. Eventually the field will move to the doctoral level; the issues are when and how. It has been said that in difficult situations, the boldest plans are the safest, so Emperor's is taking bold steps by developing a doctoral program and continuing to create integrative partnerships.

We can't predict the future, but I know that our every action creates it. These daily actions, however small or bold, will inexorably accumulate and lead to, I hope, continued greatness for next 20 years.

AT: Thank you both for your time.

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