

A Profession Old Enough to Die In

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Our brothers have fallen, my friends. They fell into the magnificent history we create together. They merged into the Tao from which all is born and all returns. Tom Riihimaki, Roger Hirsh and Rory Kerr have left us. As Roger's teacher Baolin Wu said, they went riding cranes "towards the Western Heaven to visit Lau Zi and Heaven kept them." They were among a very small number who began what has become this profession. They were a different breed who began with nothing: no profession, no schools, no licenses, no insurance coverage, no textbooks, no needles, no respect from family or community. These men were pioneers who forged the possibilities for you. Because of what they and others did, you can buy equipment for your practice, gain research-based medical credibility, and practice without fear of being arrested. Decades ago, they set down the footprints that serve as your path today.

We are a young profession going through the growing pains typical of a new industry. We are poor; our organizations change their names every decade or so and argue with one another publicly. We fight for our legal fair share, grinding legislation out of each state government. We continue to fend off attacks from oppressors who have not given up on taking over our industry. But a tide has turned. We are a profession old enough to die in. This spring and summer, our profession stepped out of adolescence and into adulthood, facing losses that force maturity.

Our comrades leave their sweat equity behind. Tom was the founder of the Oriental Medical Supply Company (OMS). Roger's legacy includes the hundreds of children born through his brilliant infertility work. He had a baby book on his waiting room table impressive enough for even the most conservative fertility specialist. Rory, who I am honored to have shared a clinic with 25 years ago, pushed our profession forward through his quiet political persistence and a lifetime of brilliant treatments. All of these men died young.

My view is that the best way to work with illness is to find the healing in it. Similarly, when addressing loss, one must find the win, the yang within yin. There is, at least, one potential win that shines brightly out of this tragedy. Rory died of colon cancer. Could his death have been prevented had he had a colonoscopy soon enough? Statistics say yes. Western medicine has developed some brilliant diagnostic techniques, and many of them can be used preventively. Have you had blood work run recently? Bone density testing? Up-to-date dental care? Do you use all of the medical diagnostic options available to you? You should. Use them for yourself, your family and your patients. Do you know your blood pressure or blood type? When did you last have a Pap smear, prostate check or comprehensive physical exam? Go! Utilize modern medicine for everything it has to offer. Find out what your stress levels and diet have done to your cortisol levels and arterial plaque. Get your moles checked for cancer.

Modern medicine is younger than ours. It can be clumsy, painful, and even dangerous treatment to receive, but it can also save your life. It could have saved Rory's, had he utilized its diagnostic prowess in a timely fashion. It can discover silent killers before they speak through symptoms. Some diagnostic techniques foretell the future as well or better than pulse diagnosis. Use them! Honor the passing of our brethren by caring for yourself, those you love and those who look to you

for medical advice. Honor those whose deaths brought a coming of age for our profession by taking better care of yourself.

Please take this moment, right now, as you sit and breathe and read, before you move off to some other piece of data deserving your attention, to acknowledge the spirits of these three men whose *chi*, courage, perseverance, dedication and passion helped to build the profession that nourishes and sustains you. Give honor to them. They have become our ancestors.

We are all contributing to a magnificent energy flow. We are birthing an industry that heals life. As there is birth, so there is death. As there is yang, so there is yin. Such is the Tao.

Your Questions and Comments

I am dealing with a severe case of lymph edema in a 79-year-old. She has had leg swelling for many years, but never this severe. After a left hip replacement, her right leg is twice its normal size from the knee down. She is not diabetic, and does not have high blood pressure. Blood and liver tests are unremarkable.

Acupuncture addressing Kidney, Spleen and Liver points has helped her lose water, but about three-quarters of a gallon of liquids remains in her grossly edematous right leg. She denies heart problems, but is pale and anemic. Unfortunately, she is not enthusiastic about getting better. It is hard to get her to come for appointments. I have not tried herbs.

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Your patient's history of dampness and stagnation (created by the dam of surgical scar tissue) accounts for the swelling location, as well as the downward spiral of your patient's attitude. Do something dramatic to get quick results. This will generate a better attitude. You need her to be optimistic enough to show up at your office. Otherwise, you won't have the opportunity to heal her.

Try these suggestions, though not necessarily all at once. Needle Four Gates (Liv 3, LI 4) to open the channels systemically, and then needle both ends of the effected channels. Needle the scar to disperse local, stagnant *chi*. Consider trying what I call the Chinese "colander technique." You literally poke holes in the body, allowing *chi* (or in this case, fluid) to escape through the holes. Place the needles evenly, 1-2 *tzun* apart, as if they were holes in a colander, and cover the entire affected area. Use lots of them and allow them to go only as far as the TMMs. If you are using tubed needles, just tap them in without further insertion, as that is a good depth. Needle with the intention of pouring off pathogenic *chi*. This is also great after surgery, as it pulls swelling down dramatically. It is also good for head bumps. I have seen golf-ball-sized head bumps reduce by 80 percent in 15 minutes. Do that several days in succession, and have her simultaneously get lymphatic massages. This Chinese colander technique gets great results with minimal effort. Within a week she will be motivated enough to take herbs. Intense treatment in spurts will work well. Herbal formulas to address constitutional weakness and damp are imperative.

Do you have a difficult case or pressing concern that no one has been able to address? Are you blindsided when patients manipulate you? Write me at felice@felicedunas.com. Perhaps I can help.

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