

Money Is Qi Is Money

Felice Dunas, PhD

Do you want to be rich? Do you aspire to make millions as an acupuncturist? Great idea! I am all for it. Let's make money, invest money and donate money. Let's retire early and be of service to the profession with all that spare time. Prosperity is one of the great universal principles of our work, so get out there and create an abundance of *qi*, blood and money!

Many of us come into this industry with visions of self-sacrifice and contribution. We dream of helping humanity. But would it hurt your prospects for enlightenment if you did that serving while in designer clothes or driving to the office in a Porsche? Simply, if you are of the inclination that you don't need much money or that being of service to the planet is the greatest reward for your work - revise your thinking. That one only worked for those of us who traded treatments for garden vegetables back in the 1970s. Times have changed.

Yin qi is self-nurturing, while *yang* is contribution-oriented. If you leave out the *yin* aspect of your practice and give primary attention to the *yang*, if you deny yourself just rewards while nurturing others, you will end up sick, broke or both. You will also find yourself helping fewer people over the long run and doing so with less joy. As someone who has worked in our industry since before it was one, I can assure you that your potential to generate income is far greater than the pioneers who came before you. A quarter of a century ago, it was harder to market a practice because no one would see a voodoo doctor unless they were almost dead. Getting a decent wage from an almost dead person was tricky. But patients are alive and kicking now and they have money to spend to get and stay well. Let's honor that fact by receiving with gratitude and self-respect.

I remember two separate times when I increased my prices like crazy. In 1986, I decided to raise my \$50 fee to \$75. On some random Tuesday night, my treatment costs increased 50 percent. I figured I was one of the best out there and my prices had to reflect that. It was tough. I had to do months of therapy to recover, but at least I could afford to pay for it.

In 1992, I decided to let go of my last clinic. I was starting to do a lot of international teaching and I just wasn't around enough to warrant paying for an office in a high-rent area. I was nervous when I closed the doors on my Pacific Palisades practice. The day after I turned in the key it hit me; I could double my fee by doing house calls and cut my overhead entirely. I felt like I was seeing sunshine for the first time. Why hadn't I done this earlier? Suddenly, I was running an exclusive, cash-only, house-call practice. Of course, I had to have a rich clientele and I couldn't show up in front of all those mansions in a clunker, so a fancy new car was needed. But is that so bad?

I am proud of the high fees that I charge for my work. Why? Well, why not? Are you? That's the whole point. Do you charge enough, and are you proud? Isn't prosperity your calling? I recently did some work for a company in Indiana. Because the corporate world expects to pay more, I had to charge more than \$400 per hour for phone consulting time. I lay in my backyard, getting a tan and spreading wisdom to the CEO of an ad agency, gleaned from our professional ancestors. The decision to raise my prices to meet the market's expectation was nerve-wracking. More therapy was required, this time at a spa. When I lecture, I charge several thousand dollars an hour. Is there

any reason why you shouldn't do that? I am using my experience to show you it can be done, and you can do it. Besides my choice to push the envelope first, I am no different than you are.

What are the best ways to make money as an acupuncturist? Understand that you are doing piecework, exchanging time for dollars. The more you charge and the more patient visits you conduct per hour, the more you make. That isn't the best way to make money, because you have to be present to make it. If you do phone consultations, like I do, you can sit on a beach in Bali - as I am at this very moment - or on an Aspen ski slope and make money. That's a good thing. But once again, you are exchanging time for money.

My suggestions include that you charge more than anybody you know. It inspires confidence in those who work with you. Surely you wouldn't be so foolish as to overcharge if you aren't any good, right? Your inferiority complex about your value as a practitioner is not your patients' business. They are more likely to comply if your recommendations cost them an arm and a leg. We all have some degree of shame about our worth. Feel it, if you need to therapize it and heal it, but raise your prices anyway.

You aren't going to get as rich off your practice as you are by investing what you save from your practice. I inherited two things from my maternal grandmother: a pair of brass candlesticks from Marshall Fields in Chicago and the saying "Money makes money, and the money that money makes, makes money." Save your money, invest it and make more money with it. Invest in real estate by buying your office building or a house to practice in. Cut your overhead by renting office space to colleagues or, better yet, MDs, who expect to pay a lot. Make more money by selling lots of stuff out of your office. Sell self-development CDs, the music that you play in your treatment rooms, neck pillows, magnet blankets, herbs, all kinds of stuff. Patients love shopping so sell big, expensive stuff. Support heart yin everywhere by providing retail therapy.

Acupuncture isn't the best way to make money. Money is. It is one of the most useful forms of *qi* out there. Learn about it, respect it and let it flow. Study it as you have studied other forms of *qi*. Get rich for everyone's sake; for heaven and earth, for the Tao, the profession, your kids and the Porsche dealer. Honor your industry and your essential self by allowing financial *qi* to come to you and through you. Let's all get rich together. Our profession matures as we grow wealthy, gaining new perspectives of the world, like from the top of Mount Fiji or the great pyramid.

This fall, I will be lecturing at the Pacific Symposium on working in the corporate world. Do you treat or consult in a corporate or hospital patient base or setting? May I pick your brain for the benefit of our colleagues? Please e-mail me. Thank you.

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