

Happy Chinese New Year!

Marilyn Allen, Editor at Large

This is the Year of the Earth Rat. It begins Feb. 7, 2008. According to Wikipedia:

"Being the first sign of the Chinese zodiac, rats are leaders, pioneers and conquerors. They are charming, passionate, charismatic, practical and hardworking. Rat people are endowed with great leadership skills and are the most highly organized, meticulous and systematic of the 12 signs [of the zodiac]. They are energetic and versatile, can usually find their way around obstacles and adapt to various environments easily. ... According to tradition, rats often carry heavy karma and at some point in life may face an identity crisis or some kind of feeling of guilt. Rats are said to often have to work very long and hard for everything they may earn or have in life."

That last part certainly sounds as if it could apply to the AOM profession, doesn't it?

The expression, "never a dull moment" also is essential to describing those born under the symbol of the rat. As the acupuncture profession emerges into the field of medicine in America, there really is never a dull moment for us. Acupuncture saw many achievements and milestones in this past year, and I am sure there are more to come. This profession knows what it wants and is discovering the way to get there. The world of acupuncture is swiftly moving into first place. Yes, the challenges come, but the profession and those working within it are able to push through and find success. The rat has struggled hard to get where it is in life and those within the acupuncture profession are no different.

Compare this with the Year of the Fire Pig, which just ended:

"The pig type is usually an honest, straightforward and patient person. They are a modest, shy character who prefers to work quietly behind the scenes. When others despair, they are often there to offer support. ... It is easy to put trust in a pig type; they won't let you down."

Those born in the Year of the Earth Rat are born leaders with the ability to talk endlessly. It is now time for members of the Oriental medical profession to express their opinions to political candidates about the strengths and healing properties of this medicine.

Another characteristic of the rat is adventure. Perhaps this is the year for new and more harrowing adventures for this profession. Every day in Oriental medicine practices throughout the country, the acupuncturist meets new patients. Just imagine the adventure that awaits the new patient who has never experienced the wondrous power of this medicine.

This also is an election year in the United States. The process started with the Iowa caucuses held in early January. Then the candidates race through all 49 remaining states - not unlike rats themselves - on a frantic quest for your votes. All of the money you spend in taxes, the time you spend jumping through regulatory hurdles and the effort you spend fending off frivolous lawsuits are due to decisions made by politicians.

This year let's use "GO" as our motto and position the profession where it rightfully belongs -

integrated in the health care system. Establish a political presence with elected officials from city councils, school boards, state assemblies, state senates and congress. Perhaps you have thought about going to your state capitol or Washington D.C. to meet your government representatives. However, in reality, it's better to meet and inform them on your own turf, right in their local offices.

Elected officials have administrators and staffers who work every day in the local offices. They look forward to meeting and talking with the local constituents. After all, you are the people who vote to elect their bosses. A phone call can serve as an introduction. As a practitioner of Oriental medicine, you are a small business owner in their district.

This being an election year, you can help in many ways other than contributing money. Get out there and do something to help. Let's make this the year to build relationships and contacts. In order to progress and get where we belong, we must work hard and develop strong relationships with the people around us.

Choose something special about your profession to share with a staffer or elected official. Be like the earth rat - strong-minded and building the profession! Use your rat-like qualities to do your part to better this field.

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