

The Courses Are Just the Appetizers

WHY YOU SHOULD ATTEND STATE AND NATIONAL AOM CONFERENCES

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I have come to realize the CEU courses offered at state or national conferences are just appetizers. By this, I mean they are not the main offering or the main reason to attend. Most of us, and I count myself as having been in this group, consider conferences as a cluster of courses. I can say that it seemed to me the purpose of conferences in our profession was a place for course offerings. Since becoming president of a state organization (the Florida State Oriental Medical Association - FSOMA), a state that puts on its own conference and sends its president to the annual AAAOM national conference, I have come to truly see that conferences really are about the profession coming together.

As president and acting conference committee chairperson of FSOMA, I honestly can say I see a completely different phenomenon taking place. I also see a totally different value to conferences. By not being an actual course attendee and instead being involved in the logistics, I have a completely different perspective, literally and figuratively.

I have noticed many things taking place and they all are good. I see and feel the energy of wonderful friendships beginning and growing. I see younger/newer practitioners and students learning the "tricks of the trade" from more seasoned practitioners. I notice future business partners meeting and beginning to come together, gleefully noticing their shared beliefs and common goals. I hear great discussions and new knowledge being shared. I see laughter, smiles and hugs. Most important to a president who loves the profession and organization she works so hard to represent, I see rooms full of energy and enthusiasm. I know this is an energy that can accomplish what no amount of money for marketing or lobbying can - fuel a momentum of growth and power to our profession that is infectious, dynamic and priceless. All of this is taking place outside of the courses. It also carries on long past the conference and positively affects everyone.

Another component of my coming to see conferences as much more than just an amalgam of courses came through the AAAOM conferences I have attended on behalf of the state of Florida. FSOMA has a policy of sending its president to the annual AAAOM conference as a state delegate. I have attended each of the AAAOM annual national conferences since becoming president at the end of 2004.

I have not signed up for or attended any courses at these conferences. Instead, I attend meetings put on by numerous organizations and commissions that guide and represent our profession nationally. There is so much going on behind the scenes at the national conference. Again, it is from this new and unique perspective that I see a dynamic to conferences I had not known before. It is a powerful and priceless dynamic of energy that occurs when we come together. Terrific and magical things occur during and because of these conferences. FSOMA has benefited dramatically, as has the state of Florida, from my attendance at the AAAOM conference. And all this without ever attending a single course offering.

The word *confer*, which is the root of *conference*, stems from two Latin words: *con* and *ferre*. *Con*

means *together* and *ferre* means *bring*. So, a conference is all about bringing people together, bringing energy and momentum together - bringing a profession together.

The vitality and power that occurs during this "coming together" is vital for our future and can be seen as a metaphor for the energy and power of our medicine, our profession and our future. It is also a major reason why you should attend state and national conferences.

Don't base your attendance on courses. Go to conferences to give and receive energy. Go to conferences to "bring together." Please share your unique and vital energy with your profession. Your energy will make the difference. Bring it along. And finally, have fun!

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