

Acupuncture's Impact on the World

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For several years, I have been hearing about the town of Rothenburg, Germany. It seemed just a dot on a map until I arrived. It is the home of the TCM Kongress which began in 1968. It has been held annually for 47 years and it has only missed one year. For the last six years, there have been more than 1,200 participants, including this year. These participants represented 38 countries. There were more than 120 speakers, which included Matt Callison, Lillian Bridges and Felice Dunas from the United States. The conference was held over five days in cooperation with 46 TCM societies and 19 TCM congresses and 16 TCM journals.

The village where this conference is held is known as "the fairy tale village". This certainly does describe the town with cobblestone lined streets and quaint shops. There is a gentleman, the city watchman, who conducts a night tour of this village every evening at 8p.m., just as it is getting dark. He dresses in a long cloak, a hat like in the Harry Potter series and carries a long pole with a candle lit lantern. He tells the tales of this village and its history as his followers walk the streets in the dark.

A Look at History

This tour started me thinking about the history of both the German town and China. What an appropriate location to hold one of the largest acupuncture conferences in the world. Old town and old medicine. The entire city overflowed with acupuncturists from many parts of the world, housed in many different hotels. They congregated in an old castle at the city walls, and do not forget the 300 steps up and down to get to the destination. The TCM Kongress provides a very rich and varied cultural and medical experience to mix and network with the other attendees. As conversations progressed throughout the week, I became more aware of the issues surrounding acupuncture and other modalities in this medicine; they are much the same worldwide.

In the United States, Kansas has just achieved recognition through licensure by the state legislature and governor's signature. Congratulations to all of the practitioners in Kansas who worked so long and tirelessly to achieve this accomplishment. A number of countries around the world are working on the same objective, one of recognition and legal status. This process is long and many times a struggle to get practitioners involved and interacting with legislative and government officials. These, as well as other issues, were discussed during a joint meeting of the U.S. and the ETCMA. (European Traditional Chinese Medicine Associations). This group has 14,000 members. Eugene London, John Scott, Christine Chang and myself had very good discussions regarding research, public relations, recognition and acceptance for the medicine and the message to be communicated to the public about this medicine. It was really eye opening to realize that both sides of the Atlantic Ocean are focused on the same issues.

I continually hear a comment, "There is not enough research." Yet, I was also privileged to attend the most recent ICIMH (International Congress of Integrative Medicine and Health) conference in Las Vegas. The poster presentations encompassed more than half of a larger ballroom in a big hotel. It seems as if there is somewhat of a gap between what individuals, groups, schools and

associations are working on and achieving. Our world is becoming more connected and yet we really don't know what is going on in this medicine. It is time to reach out, join your state and national associations so we can have power in numbers.

Moving Forward

Many outside forces are helping this medicine. The World Health Organization, represented by Zhang Qi and Nenad Kostanjsek, gave a presentation regarding the ICTM-11 diagnostic codes. The code set is in the beta phase and is being tested in a hospital in Great Britain. They answered questions and held discussions on the development and the progress of this code set to be introduced to the World Health Assembly in Japan later this year. This project is most important as it will give credibility and strength to the medicine. It will help to create harmonization and collaboration for the medicine globally.

While in Rothenburg, I attended a meeting of international journalists as well as textbook authors. They discussed the challenges of sharing articles and getting more published about this medicine. This discussion is far reaching and entails many people throughout the world. *Acupuncture Today* is one of the most widely read publications because of the news and information it prints. I was amazed to learn how many people read and enjoy this publication.

I want to thank Gerd Ohnstedt, the organizer of the conference in Germany, for his many years of service to the community in Europe and for reaching out to the U.S. It is the right time to work together to get the message to the world population about the healing and integrative strength of acupuncture and Asian medicine.

JULY 2016