



MESSAGE - GENERAL

Money: A Receipt for Your Services

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Welcome to the year of the dog—in my last column I talked about the attributes of the dog, such as loyalty, trust, etc. This month I will talk about *money* and setting some goals with money—I know, not an easy subject and one that comes with a certain stigma. However, let's approach it with the idea that money is nothing more than a receipt for the services you render.

Your Beliefs About Money

As you're reading this I would like you to take a few minutes to think about what you heard about money when you were growing up. Money concepts are passed down from grandparents, parents, and other relatives. Consider how what you heard may have influenced your money consciousness.

A number of years ago Honora L. Wolfe from Blue Poppy and I did some seminars on how to make \$100,000 after you graduate. After these seminars we wrote the book, "Points for Profit." We discovered that practitioners have money issues, specifically with profit. Yet everything in the profession involves money, the making, the spending, and the use of money. Whether it is running your own practice, renting space from another practitioner, sharing costs with a large group, or working for someone else—it all involves money.

The acupuncture profession has reached a crossroads. Our professional associations are numerous, yet many people have chosen not to join an association. Some people say it's because they do not have enough money. Yet a professional association is the group that provides advocacy for our profession. These organizations need our financial support—you guessed it, it costs money to have advocates working for us and this medicine. And what we can gain will be far greater than what we sacrifice.



Projects include supporting legislation, whether it is state or national, Acupuncture Without Borders, the Acupuncture Now Foundation, or the Consortium for Oriental Medicine Research and Education—all of these groups need financial support from us. In the past we have looked toward vendors and other entities to support these efforts, but it is time everyone in the profession step up and begin to support these groups that are so diligently working to spread the word about acupuncture. Now, look back at your own practice and personal experience, what is your definition of money? And how do you interact with money every day. I know it's a very personal item and it's often easier to talk about anything other than money. And yet we deal with money every day. Whether it is paying your bills, making a decision about what you will do with *extra money*, or just living and affording your expenses.

Every acupuncturist has the right to set their own fees, and decide how patients are going to pay. It is important to think not only about yourself in this profession but to start thinking about the profession as an entire entity throughout the U.S. We have 50 different states in this country. Each state has its own laws/regulations and regulatory body. But we all share the same common goal—we are here to help people reach a new level of health.

It seems every time a survey is done to gauge the kind of money that acupuncturists make in their practices, a very small amount is reported. At the beginning of this article I said money is just a receipt for the services you render. So, what is it that needs to be done in this profession to create a revenue stream that will begin to support the profession, build professional association memberships, create money for advocacy and support, and projects that will help others? Does it mean we have to change how we think about money in our headspace?

Give some thought to the services that you render every day. What if you treated one more patient each day? How would this change your ability to join an association, or support the projects that need funding?

Money & Insurance

There was an announcement in January that in the state of Ohio Medicaid will begin reimbursing for acupuncture treatments. This means that in order to get paid for that type of patient an insurance claim has to be submitted. Dealing with insurance is not something that everybody wants to do, but when every patient is required to have insurance and insurance pays for acupuncture care, believe me the patients will want to use it.

This type of repayment for services opens up a whole different discussion—I find that across the U.S. many acupuncturists don't accept insurance, or don't want to help patients with their insurance claims and reimbursement. Here's a question to consider—if insurance reimburses for acupuncture services but the practitioner doesn't want to take insurance, or help a patient with insurance, will another group fill that gap?

The discussion in this article is meant to help us begin to look at this profession and realize that we are the fastest-growing medicine in the world today. We help others, as such we deserve to be reimbursed for the services that we render, even if it means we have to file a claim.

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