

First Do No Harm: Plastics in AOM Practice

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In "[Once Upon a Time in China](#)," Jet Lee portrays physician / martial artist Wong Fei Hung during the Boxer Rebellion. Acupuncture was practiced with permanent needles passed through a candle flame before use. Herbal medicine was stored in earthenware jars.

In contrast to this zero-waste approach, we now use needles in plastic blister packs and herbs in plastic shrouds. Why shrouds? Because plastic is destroying life on Planet Earth. Ninety percent of seabirds have plastics in their stomachs. If we had no way of disposing of our plastic, our clinics would be neck deep in this toxic substance.

Macroplastics

Remember thinking our plastics were actually being recycled? Instead, they were being shipped to Asia by the kiloton. As Chinese scientists watched the devastation of the land, wildlife and people of China, a halt was called to our toxic trash. As a consequence, 12.7 million tons of plastic enter the oceans annually. Albatross chicks die with bellies full of plastic trash.

In the documentary "[Blue Planet II](#)," a whale carries her dead calf as the entire pod mourns with her. That baby whale may have died from toxins in the mother's milk. Baby sea turtles and fish drown when entrapped with plastic rings.

Sun Si Miao refused to incorporate animal ingredients into his herbal medicinals. He felt suffering was not a part of healing. He would be horrified to witness the suffering of sea life today. Beaches worldwide are contaminated with plastic trash. *Our clinic stopped handing out plastic spoons with granular formulas. Patients take one level teaspoon twice daily to achieve a dose of 10 grams.*

Microplastics

The emerging field of microplastics estimates that 100,000 tons of microplastic and synthetic fibers are falling on the Earth every year. As our population increases, so does this pollution. Plastic bottles and containers release microplastics into their contents.

Plastic manufacture includes various chemical elements to "enhance" the end product. In addition, the hydrophobic nature of plastic particles results in adsorption of toxins to their surface: chemicals, agricultural wastes, heavy metals, etc. This toxic soup is ingested in the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe.

There is no place on Earth where this does not occur. Eating seafood increases the load substantially. *One reason I currently do not prescribe fish or seafood to my patients.* (This is something the [Gerson Institute](#) also advises.)

Human Illness

National Institutes of Health scientist Antonia Calafat found that microplastics in the blood of

pregnant women cross the placental barrier. This can result in: developmental disorders, gestational diabetes, decreased birth weight, allergic asthma and other respiratory problems in newborns. *This is one of the many reasons our clinic currently does not treat infertility.*

Plastics disrupt the endocrine system. Microplastics are implicated in reduced reproductive capacity and prostate cancer in men, as well as endometriosis and endocrine-related cancers in woman.

Each of us is ingesting enough microplastic each week to make a credit card. Most is excreted from the body. Stool samples from around our world show that microplastic fibers are found in samples in every country tested. After it leaves our bodies, it goes back into the environment to contaminate life. The plastic that remains within us travels through the circulatory system to the brain and internal organs, resulting in inflammation and vascular occlusions.

Taking Action

Mayway was one of the first companies to voluntarily remove shrink wrap from its prepared patent medicines. Here are some of the steps every AOM practitioner can take to help our environment, our health and our world:

- Stop using plastic spoons.
- Purchase needles with the least packaging possible and with metal handles.
- Question putting needles in plastic biohazard containers which will be incinerated.
- Wear 100 percent cotton lab coats.
- Work with all your vendors to find alternatives for plastic packaging.
- Adopt a plastic-free, zero-waste lifestyle as a model for your patients.

The Future

Many climatologists estimate that 90 percent of the human population will be dead by 2050. Sixteen-year-old [Greta Thunberg](#) recently spoke to the delegates of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, urging them to take immediate action to stop pollution and global warming. Ninety-seven-year-young Sir David Attenborough jumped with joy at the release of "[Seven Worlds, One Planet](#)."

Plastic is a \$600 billion industry annually. Coca Cola manufactures enough plastic bottles every year to circle the globe 700 times. The U.S. and Brazil are the largest sources of pollution in our world. The petro-chemical industry in our country and the beef industry in Brazil account for the most massive destruction of life in the entire history of our species. The current fires in the Amazon are testimony to the consequences of greed. Like a plague of locusts, corporate powers devour the Earth's resources, which threaten the foundation of all life.

Poised on the threshold of extinction, perhaps it is time to think outside the plastic blister pack and bottle.

Suggested Resources

- Beth Terry: [My Plastic Free Life](#)
- Bea Johnson: [Zero Waste Home](#)
- Anne Marie: [The Zero Waste Chef](#)
- [#BreakFreeFromPlastic](#) (an international group)
- www.greenamerica.org

