



CSOMA's International Expo 2001: An Outstanding Forum

Benjamin Dierauf

Licensed acupuncturists from around the country convened at the San Francisco Airport Clarion Hotel August 3-5, 2001 for the California State Oriental Medical Association's annual conference. The theme, "From the Jade Palace to the 21st Century," covered a diverse variety of topics, ranging from the Daoist wisdom of Jeffrey Yuen to the cutting edge of modern Oriental medicine research.

Initiating the Expo on Friday, August 3rd was a well-received daylong class on Korean hand therapy by Dan Lobash, PhD, LAc, followed by a general session panel discussion on the current state of Oriental medicine. Panelists Marilyn Nielsen, executive office of the California Acupuncture Board; David Molony, AAOM executive director; Brian Fennen, former CAOMA and CSOMA President; and myself, fielded questions on a wide range of subjects. Questions were asked primarily by students regarding the California licensing exam, then shifted towards the meaning and implications of primary care as defined by our OM licensing statutes in states such as California, New Mexico, Florida and others. Among the key points derived from the discussion:

- Acupuncturists licensed by states as primary care providers can treat patients as their first line caregiver and can manage all aspects of their health care.
- We must refer when necessary; have the ability to assess and provide a Western medical diagnosis when appropriate; and be able to communicate effectively orally and in writing with other health care providers.

It was also stressed that primary care is not a modality, and that there is no such thing as a "primary Oriental medical care provider." As licensed acupuncturists under the laws of our respective states, we treat patients using OM modalities delineated by our scope of practice. If we are primary care providers, our patients can rely on us to be their primary medical contact and manage their overall care.

On Saturday, the conference swung into full gear with five simultaneous seminars and a student caucus. First was a 1.5 hour *falun gong/qi gong (falun dafa)* session. *Falun gong* is practiced by approximately 9% of the population in China to promote health and cultivate "truthfulness, compassion and forbearance." Although *falun gong* is politically controversial, participants attending the class expressed that there was a real value in the Expo providing the opportunity for attendees to participate and better understand the practice of this internal art.

Most popular on the Saturday morning lineup was Raven Lang's class on OM pediatrics. Packed with information and attendees, the star of the class was one-year-old Emma Pearl Surasky-Dierauf, who functioned as a wonderfully engaged demonstration model (no bias here!). Also well-received were classes by Dr. Jake Paul Fratkin on diagnosing immune system problems; Dr. David Wells on bone imagery; and Neal Gumenick, MAc (UK), on the mental/emotional/spiritual aspects of the five elements.

At the student caucus, two student representatives from each Oriental medicine college were invited to participate and allowed to attend the rest of the conference classes at no cost. The goal was to develop an independent student voice for representation to Oriental medical professional associations, regulatory boards, accreditation commissions, and so forth.

A foremost concern of many of the students was dissatisfaction with the quality of education they were receiving, and their inability to effect change within their educational environments. Many student representatives were uninformed about primary care and its implications on their current education and future profession. If so informed, students thought the inherent necessity of Western science/medical classes would be better appreciated. It also became clear that both the colleges and the profession need to do a better job in educating the public and potential students about primary care and Oriental medicine, and how it influences our education and profession. (*Note to students:* If your school was not represented at this caucus, please call 800-477-4564 to become involved.)

Saturday's luncheon keynote speaker was Dr. Tony Kuo from the UCLA School of Family Practice, who spoke about his Eastern upbringing and the need for collaborative care between the Western and Oriental medicine professions. As a native of Taipei, Taiwan, Dr. Kuo grew up in a neighborhood where "our local Chinese herbalist was considered the health maintenance authority of the community as well as our preferred primary care provider, and where Western physicians addressed acute problems such as infections, broken bones, and skin lacerations." CSOMA and Dr. Kuo are both very excited about partnership discussions between CSOMA and UCLA that would collaboratively generate much needed research on Oriental medicine as it bridges and integrates within the modern healthcare system.



Hastening the opportunity for this and other research partnerships to occur, CSOMA's new executive director, Rebekah Buckles, announced the formation of a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit foundation that will spearhead educational and research initiatives on behalf of and in conjunction with OM practitioners. Dr. Kevin McNamee, founder of The Supply Center, presented a \$1500 check covering the start-up costs for the nonprofit's formation. This will allow for receipt of charitable donations, as well as the procurement of public and private grants designed to explore and better establish the efficacy and the application of our medicine.

Saturday afternoon classes covered a wide range of topics, from Dr. Holly Guzman's well-received class on understanding lab tests from Oriental and Western perspectives to Dr. Miki Shima's overview of Kampo (Japanese herbal medicine). The research panel, with an esteemed lineup never before seen at any professional OM conference, was fascinating on several levels. Beyond the research itself, the research panelists were subject to diverse attendee inquiries covering a gamut of issues, from the need for better research terminology of OM phenomena, to moral and ethical issues surrounding the use of animals. The diversity of inquiries, responses and dialogue gave unusual depth and insight for all that participated. Highlights included presentations by Dr. Debu Tripathy, one of the premier research oncologists, on breast cancer treatment with Tibetan herbal medicine, and Dr. McNamee on a scientific survey of California OM graduates in the last five years. Dr. McNamee found that while respondents were generally satisfied with their training in acupuncture and Oriental medicine (almost 98% thought their training in point location was "fair" or better), more than 38% felt their overall training for entry into the profession was "not adequate" or only "somewhat adequate"!

The Saturday evening panel discussion further enriched the attendees' understanding of primary care and recent developments in education. Lixin Huang, president of the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, discussed (among other things) collaborative research underway with California Pacific Medical Center on stroke patients. Dr. William Morris of Emperor's College talked about some of their innovative educational approaches, in which old models of education (where students open up their minds and teachers pour in information) are being replaced by new models that offer a highly interactive dynamic, allowing students to better grasp and organize the ideas and concepts of OM. Dr. Kathy White presented some of the objectives in research and study of a new PhD program at the American University of Classical Chinese Medicine where, due to stringent entrance requirements and high demand, many applicants are turned away.

Finally, Dr. William Prenskey elaborated on Mercy College in New York, where a full-scope Oriental medicine program has been completely integrated into a Western style teaching hospital, producing highly competent OM practitioners who are fully able to advocate and provide OM treatment to patients in all services of a modern hospital. Dr. Prenskey also described our current professional state succinctly: "Depending on our educational standards, it is up to us. We can either become technicians under other healthcare workers, completely exposed to the whims and low fee structures of managed care, or we can continue to struggle to remain independent and fulfill the role of primary care professionals, working to have the knowledge and flexibility to create for ourselves the situation that best fits our individual needs and that of Oriental medicine."

Sunday morning began with an introductory class in medical *qi gong* taught by Dr. Jerry Alan Johnson. Dr. Johnson currently teaches medical *qi gong* at the Five Branches Institute, where a groundbreaking program on this subject has been established. Students learn not only the various techniques of influencing patient *qi*, but also how to develop their own *qi* to protect themselves from their patients' pathogenic *qi*. This is a whole field of TCM that has needs to be better incorporated into what is taught here in this country. Currently, only about 10% of the U.S.-trained acupuncturists practice *qi gong* on a daily basis, versus about 90% of China-trained practitioners.

Within the Expo's Sunday morning lineup were stellar classes taught by Dr. William Morris on pulse diagnosis and Janice Walton-Hadlock, LAc on treatment of Parkinson's disease, but as in past years, the most popular class of the conference was taught by Daoist priest Jeffrey Yuen - "Cultivating the Teacher Within." Listening to Jeffrey Yuen reach deep into the more philosophical and spiritual aspects of our medicine has become a Sunday morning tradition at the Expo. (*Note*: tapes of all seminars can

be ordered through Conference Recording Services at 800-647-1110).

Also on Sunday morning, for those that deeply love herbs and policy, was a meeting of the CSOMA Herb Panel. A number of critically important issues were discussed, including: aristolochic acid and the FDA; California's Proposition 65, which forces herb manufacturers to place labels on their products stating that "contents may contain substances known to cause cancer and reproductive disorder"; and proposed regulatory changes for ma huang (ephedrae).

Another feature of the CSOMA Expo was a track of classes for new practitioners that taught practice setup/protocol; marketing; insurance/workers' comp billing; and medical report writing. Taught by Drs. Iris Gold and Kevin McNamee, a diverse range of vitally important information for growing our OM practices was covered -- much of it which is still not being taught by many of the schools. These sessions were dynamic, highly interactive, and very well received.

We would be remiss without mentioning a favorite and keenly vital element of the Expo: our vendors, who provide attendees the opportunity to see and sample the state-of-the-art in products and services that grow and sustain Oriental medicine as a profession. This year, as in past years, our vendor booth area was a sellout! Always a favorite, the CSOMA vendor raffle generated a plethora of prizes for attendees, and much needed funding for CSOMA's legislative efforts.

As our profession continues to grow and evolve, so too does CSOMA and the Expo. This year's event was the largest, best attended, and most successful ever! Heartfelt thanks are extended to our Board of Directors, volunteers, staff, attendees and vendors, as the success of Expo is a team effort. We anticipate next year's event to take the Expo to a whole new level of educational exploration, opportunity and outreach. With new operational leadership and administrative systems now in place, CSOMA's commitment to enhance the quality of education that LAc's receive has been infused with new resolve and vigor!

The next CSOMA International Expo and Convention will be held August 9-12, 2002 at the San Francisco Airport Westin Hotel. We hope to see you there.

OCTOBER 2001