

Tales of Adventure from the West

What a month it's been! As I write this article just before the start of Labor Day weekend, I'm flying home to California after spending the last few days in Boulder, Colorado, where I had the opportunity to speak to seniors and new graduates from Southwest Acupuncture College. There's something about being on a college campus that always puts me in a good mood. Maybe it's being around so many young people who really care about and believe in acupuncture and Oriental medicine. Maybe it's that look you sometimes see when a student realizes what you're talking about. You make a connection, and suddenly everything "clicks" in that student's mind. It's a tremendously satisfying experience, and one of the main reasons I still do so much traveling each year.

Southwest is just one of the few places I've visited recently. In the past month, I've been to the CSOMA conference in San Francisco, and also visited Rainstar University and the Phoenix Institute of Herbal Medicine and Acupuncture in Arizona. Space prohibits me from going into too many details about my journey, but I thought I'd share some of my experiences to give you a perspective of what's happening in our profession.

California

This August, for the first time, CSOMA held a day-long business track at its annual meeting, with myself as moderator. The track covered various aspects of how to create, run and build a successful practice. Since this was the first time CSOMA offered a business track, we weren't exactly sure to expect, but we reserved a large room and hoped for the best. The track turned out better than anyone expected - in fact, the large room we'd reserved ended up being too small to hold all of the attendees. Many people had to stand in the back of the room or out in the hallway to listen, but from the looks on their faces, they didn't seem to mind.

The morning sessions covered some of the essentials of practice management. Jason Luban did an excellent job discussing the importance of having correct billing software, and Kevin McNamee supplied some great marketing and networking ideas. Honora Wolfe then took the stage and delivered a stirring talk on how practitioners could not only make money, but to make money honestly and with integrity.

After a break for lunch, the afternoon session began. Fred Lerner opened the festivities with a detailed program on how to take a patient's history and proper examination procedures. Garrett Casey, a chiropractor who has just completed his training at Emperor's College in Santa Monica (way to go, Garrett!) followed with a presentation on how the workers' compensation system works, which was especially useful for practitioners in California. Finally, Shawn Steel took the stage and captivated the audience with a program on personal injury cases. Shawn is a former chair of the California Acupuncture Board and is presently the chair of the California Republican Party. I've heard Shawn speak on numerous occasions, but I believe he outdid himself here. He was funny and informative, and he really looked like he was enjoying himself in the process.

Both the morning and afternoon sessions were packed with students and new practitioners interested in learning how to operate a practice. The entire day was an overwhelming success, and received rave reviews from several people in attendance. I want to personally thank everyone who participated in making the CSOMA Expo such a great event, and to those who made my job moderating the business track that much easier.

Arizona

My whirlwind month didn't stop in San Francisco. After CSOMA, I was off to Scottsdale, Arizona, where I was given the opportunity to teach a business management class at Rainstar University and meet up with my good friend Lloyd Wright. Lloyd has done a tremendous job shaping the acupuncture and Oriental medicine program at Rainstar, and I wish his school all the best.

My next stop in Arizona was at the Phoenix Institute, where a group of students, alumni and I bonded over a meal of some outstanding Chinese food one Saturday evening to listen and discuss marketing tips for practice growth. The profession is growing by leaps and bounds in Arizona, and acupuncturists are receiving much more attention and acceptance by the medical community there. A special thanks to Jean Wise, executive director of the Arizona Acupuncture Board, for sharing her knowledge and insight into scope of practice issues and enforcement cases.

Colorado

My last stop in August was the Boulder, Colorado campus of Southwest Acupuncture College. As usual, the attendees and I spent time sharing information and answering questions on insurance and risk management. This included malpractice insurance and how the market has changed since the events of last September 11. Some long-established malpractice insurers are no longer writing policies for acupuncture because of the losses they have sustained. Others have left the market altogether. I have no doubt that this is going to have an effect on the profession, and it may cause concern among some people who are about to graduate or are just opening a practice. But the majority of those in attendance seemed upbeat about the prospects for the future of acupuncture and Oriental medicine, and the overall feel of the meeting was quite positive.

Every day, I get calls from acupuncturists and former students all across the country who want to share a little tidbit about something new happening in the profession, or how a patient has been helped with this technique or that therapy. These little success stories are what make my job that much more enjoyable.

What's going on in your part of the world? We want to know about it. If you've got an interesting story to share, or even if you'd like to comment on something you've read in *Acupuncture Today*, send a message to the e-mail address at the end of this article. Your participation is what helps make this publication successful, and it lets us know how we can better serve this profession. That's what we're here for - to serve you.

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