

What the Drug Companies Don't Want You to Know

Marilyn Allen, Editor at Large

I first began writing this article in the month of March, but as most of us do, I procrastinated. I actually was sitting on an airplane on my way to the Great River Symposium in Bloomington, Minn. I must add that this was a great conference. It was very cold, which is why they hold the conference at that time because during the warmer months, everyone wants to be outside. More than 400 acupuncturists attended this conference. It was great to see this many practitioners all together talking and enjoying the festivities.

OK, back to my flight. Of course, I was interested in who was in the seat next to me. He was very polite and kept thanking the crew member serving him. As any good marketer worth their salt would do, I opened the conversation by asking if he was going to Minnesota for a visit or headed home. Our discussion was most educational. As it happened, he was a supervisor for a drug company and his territory was the West Coast. He was well-spoken and seemed to have flawless manners.

He shared with me some interesting insights into the world of pharmaceuticals and its marketing and sales strategies. He said that if the population of the United States would look at their diet, change their eating habits and exercise regularly, it would put the drug companies out of business. What a concept! He also said that many doctors don't want to see drug reps, but they still want the free samples. Another point he made was that doctors get their knowledge about the drugs from the company reps. His company meets on a weekly basis to discuss which drug they will focus on and the best ways to increase sales.

This entire discussion caused me to think about how the Oriental medicine profession can influence the diet and eating habits of the patients it serves. In the area of dieting, it's not just about losing weight, but a complete lifestyle change. How can acupuncture support these changes?

I did ask if his family took any of the drugs he sold - he replied with a solid "No!" He continued to say that any medication taken orally has some negative effects on the liver. Furthermore, with drugs taken in combination with each other, no one really knows what is happening or the possible side effects. Now I am thinking even more about what we ingest and digest.

The practice of acupuncture is referred to as both art and science. The art can involve helping a person live differently while the science involves how you help to achieve the difference. The general population consumes medication daily, and it's the acupuncture practitioner's job to communicate to their patients through the spoken word, treatments and daily lifestyle, how the radiance of health is regained and maintained.

There are so many lotions, potions and products on the market today with claims of looking younger by

improving the circulatory and nerve networks to revitalize the skin. Vibrant health begins on the inside, and Oriental medicine is an artful and scientific treatment to help achieve that state of being.

Coping with the stress of life is an ever more difficult task. People are worried about gas prices, the cost of food and, in some cases, shelter. Acupuncture provides a "time out" to relieve the stresses of the day and room to relax and rejuvenate. These times present an excellent opportunity to share with patients how acupuncture can strengthen the very essence and *jing* of their lives.

As stresses and pressures increase, we must look to the lighter side of life. The spring and summer are the time for colorful flowers and fresh outdoor air. Everyone loves a makeover. This year, reinvent yourself and, in turn, help patients to enjoy their lives more. Look to the little things to help make people happy.

Health and happiness go hand in hand. Help others achieve their health goals. Take the challenge to share this medicine with others every day. Participate in a community event and you will feel as good as gold.

I hope you have read the article on the front page about the growing relationship between pharmaceutical manufacturers and herbal companies. We all must work together to overcome any ill effects from these contractual agreements. It will be our responsibility to inform the public - starting with each patient.

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