

What Acupuncture Can Do For You

A SIMPLIFIED GUIDE TO BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION

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If your Chinese medical school business-management course was anything like mine, the main focuses were your clinic name, location and business-card font. Sure, presentations and networking were mentioned for a few seconds; then it was back to the business-card design obsession. Or maybe your class went on and on about whether to put an ad in the Yellow Pages. That was a big topic in my class. It went on and on and on.

Maybe you are a recent graduate or an established practitioner who knows the importance of public presentations, but no one really showed you how to do it. That is the focus of this article. I want you to walk away from this article with a clear understanding of how to construct an effective presentation to educate the community and new patients, get referrals and have your practice grow. It's much easier than you think.

I must admit that at first, the idea of getting up in front of strangers regularly to talk about Chinese medicine was very nerve-wracking. I was worried about what they might ask or not ask and care or not care about. That was the wrong mindset. Instead, I had to walk in there and guide the talk, the questions and what information was important. I had to take charge so the talk was organized, efficient and easy enough to understand for everyone (or should I say almost everyone, since not everyone will get it) to walk away with some basic, useful information.

I've heard too many stories of practitioners who are out of school for about five years and only see five patients a week. That's not good. Aren't they out meeting people and networking? Some grads feel that because they have the education, people will line right up once they hear a healer is in town. I had a fellow student tell me patients will know to come to them because their energy was right.

You can't do too many presentations or too much networking. You have to get it into your mind that these things are essential for success. Yes, there are periods during which you don't do it as much because business is good, but it should always be in the back of your mind.

Putting It All Together

All of the following information is based on a talk of approximately 15 to 20 minutes using a PowerPoint slide presentation, with time for questions after the presentation. Leaving time for questions at the end is very important and should be encouraged at the beginning of the talk. If people are allowed to ask questions during the presentation, it can throw off what you have prepared and take you in a totally different direction. Remember, you guide the talk.

Since we didn't grow up with Chinese medicine in the U.S., many terms and concepts are completely foreign. The solution is to simplify, simplify, simplify. I preface each talk by saying that I'm not a

historian, so I won't be discussing Chinese history, dynasties and dates. I then tell attendees the talk is too short to go into how acupuncture works. A common phrase I use is: "Since I don't have time to go into how acupuncture works, let's just be in agreement that it does work and start the presentation from there." With this, I've just avoided two detailed and time-consuming topics to get to the important information. Honestly, most people don't really care about history or how it works; they just want to know how it can make them feel better, so get good at that.

My friend, colleague and life coach, Mary Maisey-Ireland, gave me the best advice. She said, "This is not school; it's information. Keep it simple." Every talk I've given has been based on what she said. It should be the same for you.

When I first started compiling slides, I went overboard. I went into detail about *qi* and blood, the five elements, diagnosis, etc. It was way too much. I still have all the slides, but I cut them down. I currently have 118 slides with which to work. Depending on the talk I give, I can pull the appropriate slides the night before (about 10 to 15 of them), string them together, and I'm ready to go.

You want the slide base to be full of case studies for certain conditions you treat, slides outlining the basic concepts in TCM, and pictures showing cups, needles and whatever else you use. Of course, an intro slide showing your name, clinic and the speech topic, and a final slide with a nice picture and the words "thank you," should be included as well. The slides have the basic information, but you provide the detail. Don't put all the information on the slide and read from it. Make eye contact and have the audience focus their attention on you, rather than reading the information on the slide.

Your talk should have a basic theme. All my talks have the same theme:

- Disease is the result of imbalance in the body (*yin* and *yang*).
- TCM treats the root and branches of disease.
- TCM treat the whole person.

These three themes work for any talk, case study and diagnosis. Throughout the talk, you can keep coming back to these three key concepts. If you repeat the basic information enough, the audience will remember it. Even if they get confused during the case study discussion, the three themes keep their attention. Let's examine each theme in more detail:

What Is Disease?

This is a great time to talk about opposites - heat, cold, interior, exterior, excess, deficiency. I tell the audience that for TCM practitioners, everything can be broken down into *yin* and *yang* and an imbalance between the two. There is no need to go into detailed theory or philosophies.

This also is the time to talk about the difference between AOM and other modalities. Don't insult any other medicine; just highlight our strength. Letting the audience know we treat the cause of disease, not just the symptoms, better explains the idea of wellness, as well as treatment length.

Mention body, mind and spirit, the importance of emotions, and the detailed intake to find out about the patient. I usually give an example to highlight this theme: Two people with the same complaint leave the office with two different diagnoses, two different treatment plans and two different formulas. Why? Because each person is unique. Everyone is different, so why give everyone the same formula?

How Does TCM Work?

Now we come to the technique slides. Audience members who think Oriental medicine is just needles will find this part to be informative. I have two slides with several techniques on each, each highlighted with a nice picture. The first slide shows acupuncture, herbs and *tuina*. The second slide shows electrostimulation and plum blossom needles. I provide more detailed information. You could add moxa to the second slide and also talk about celebrities such as Gwyneth Paltrow, who had cup marks on her back at a New York film premiere. Many people remember that.

So what do we have so far?

- 100 or so slides as a base from which to draw;
- an introductory slide;
- three theme slides; and
- technique slides showing needles, cups, *tuina*, electrostimulation and moxa.

Just the Facts

Next, you should provide some facts. I have a slide with a quote from the World Health Organization (WHO) stating more than 40 conditions are recognized as being treated by acupuncture. The slide also states the reason for this is due to the lack of side effects our medicine offers. The slide after that lists many of the conditions we treat. It legitimizes what we do for people who need that sort of evidence.

So, now we can add a medical fact (WHO) slide, stating support for acupuncture; and a slide showing the various conditions we treat.

State Your Case

What I have listed above can be the beginning of almost any talk. Next, you can personalize it with some case studies. I gathered five really unique cases in order to highlight the broad spectrum of conditions that come into my clinic. I want to get the audience past the idea that acupuncture is only for pain. We do so much more. I chose dizziness, hot flashes, plantar fasciitis, mouth numbness and eczema.

I started each slide with information such as: "Female, 55 years old" and provided key details about the case. I listed tongue, pulse, and diagnosis and treatment plan. I listed any medication the patient was taking and their reason for the visit. I talked about the patient's progress and how many treatments it took. At this point, the audience is looking at "liver *qi* stagnation" and other foreign words and phrases. I always tell them not to worry about the details and go back to the main themes.

Why list these words and phrases? The audience should know we go through a thorough history, then diagnose and actually have a plan. I tell them when and why herbs were or were not an appropriate choice in a particular case. Remember, however, all of it is just information. Don't try to impress them with any complicated words. Impress them with real case studies about people like them who have been helped by acupuncture. Once they are in your clinic, you can go further and teach terms and how we look at the body in more detail. Your main purpose is to educate, get referrals and build a strong patient base.

After the case studies, I open the floor up for questions. I also make sure to let my audience know I have business cards and brochures for them to take.

To recap, here's what you need to do an effective presentation of this nature:

- an introductory slide;
- three theme slides;
- technique slides showing needles, cups, *tuina*, electrostimulation and moxa;
- a medical fact (WHO) slide, stating support for acupuncture;
- a slide showing the various conditions we treat;
- five case study slides;
- a "thank you!" slide with a picture of a mountain or something peaceful; and
- time to answer questions.

A general guideline is to spend 30 seconds to one minute on each slide. Keep the talk moving and interesting. Be confident with the material. Remember, 90 percent of your patients are referrals from other patients and your exposure to the community; not from the font on your business card.

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