

'Tis the Season of Giving

ACUPUNCTURE VACATIONS WITH A PURPOSE

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Our public health column has a history of encouraging both practitioners and students to consider mixing business with pleasure. With winter months upon us and holiday vacations looming, we'd like to share with you some programs that just might add the boost you need to your CEUs, your practice and your soul. Here are some great reasons to consider an acupuncture-based vacation:

- Further the development of your skills and understanding of your practice.
- Keep your skills active during periods of time you might not have a private practice.
- Vacation with a purpose.
- Some programs may offer PDA/CEUs for your license renewal.
- Tax write-off for full or partial expenses of your trip, depending upon its scope.
- Experience in other health systems and working with patients of diverse cultures.

Some Programs to Consider

Bali, Indonesia: A 10-day intensive program in pediatrics and women's health with *sho-ni-shin*, acupuncture and Chinese herbs. You will mix didactic learning with the treatment of infants, children, women and mothers from local villages in a community-style setting. It provides 20 NCCAOM PDAs, airport transfer, daily breakfast, two excursions and two levels of accommodations (15-day stay) for a cost of \$2,900 - \$3,150. We were not able to get the winter schedule but hope the intensive training is offered again in 2010. Find out more at www.somadevi.com.

Belize, Central America: A seven-day "Business Bootcamp" that mixes daily lectures on low-cost, proven marketing strategies, social networking, expanding into specializations or the integrative marketplace, along with clinical discussion groups that encourage patient growth, retention and referrals, including the discussion of psychosocial, ethical and liability issues. It provides 18 NCCAOM PDAs (including Ethics), airport transfers, seven nights accommodation, three meals a day and yoga classes for \$1,499. The trip is Jan. 30 - Feb. 6, 2010. More information at www.ombusinessbootcamp.com.

Dominican Republic: Two third-year acupuncture students spent their semester break in La Romana (one hour east of Santo Domingo) as part of an acupuncture pilot program at the International Family AIDS Program (IFAP). The AIDS program is funded by Columbia University. It is the vision of Dr. Juan Carlos Carazas to develop a more formal way to accept acupuncturists and students for rotations. The experience of the students was focused on clinical practice as they aided the local community and treated symptoms of malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

"I was able to learn how to do intakes in Spanish and interact with people from a wide variety of educational levels and accents. Certainly my diagnostic skills improved, and I was grateful to be able

to refer some patients immediately to Western physicians for antibiotics," says Jason Johnson, one of the students who participated.

The second attendee, Marisa Fanelli, stated, "It really helped me become faster at both coming up with treatment plans and needling. It also helped me learn to work with the basics and improvise. The experience of learning to communicate in ways other than with words was priceless."

The students paid for their own meals and brought \$100 of supplies with them. More information at www.familyaids.org.

West Bengal, India: Although Acupuncture Institute and Free Community Clinic of Ananda Nagar (AIAN) is a full three-year academic program, the clinic always welcomes visiting teachers or practitioners. The clinic is located in an extremely poor, rural area of India, where basic medicine is lacking and the population is largely undiagnosed and untreated. Its free clinic administers treatment for individuals with either acute or serious chronic conditions, markedly enhancing the overall quality of life for its patients.

Former visiting practitioner Allison Quiring says, "Clinic lasted all morning, and sometimes went into the afternoon, since we attempted to treat everyone who came in. Some people would walk for hours or take the train from many miles away to get there. We treated many of the same conditions I treat in the U.S., such as musculoskeletal problems, headaches, menstrual problems, and gastrointestinal problems. There were also many conditions I had no experience treating, such as leprosy, malnutrition and children who are failing to thrive."

The clinic was founded in 1990 by Kalyanika, a German acupuncturist whose vision was to provide low-cost medical treatment to the poor by teaching students acupuncture. Her popularity quickly took hold, and she was soon treating 25 to 40 patients every morning, five days a week. You can get more information at www.acuindia.org.

Thanks to pioneering acupuncturists around the world, there are more settings than ever where we can provide access to AOM care. Taking advantage of these opportunities allows our profession to continually evolve, ensuring that health care which includes wellness can be a right, not a privilege, for individuals around the world. Vacations are must-haves to preserve your *qi*. Combining inspiration, education and vacation will feed your practice and your soul.

DECEMBER 2009