

HOW TO ESTABLISH A SUCCESSFUL ACUPUNCTURE PRACTICE.
..... ABOUT REACHING YOUR FULL POTENTIAL.

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CHAPTER 1.

RANDOM THOUGHTS ABOUT THE BUSINESS OF ACUPUNCTURE.

Basic rations

I am sure that for each practitioner the definition of a successful acupuncture practice will vary to some degree.

Keeping this scenario uppermost in my mind, I would like to put forward some of the possibilities and outcomes that I have experienced during 20 years of clinical experience.

Acknowledging that each and everyone of us can become polarized in a particular direction depending upon our priorities in life.

A successful practice/business will usually take on an energetic life of its own, requiring our management.

By taking the pulse or managing your business you can stay on top in front of the game.

Whilst it would be fantastic if we all had a natural inclination to pay sufficient attention to all the aspects of creating a successful practice, the truth of the matter is that in most cases it becomes necessary to pay homage in some degree to the unfamiliar or uncomfortable aspects of creating a successful practice.

It is all too easy to pursue our favorite endeavors to the detriment of other essential elements such as book keeping, banking, cleaning and maintenance all ensuring a future in the profession.

This is a perfect example of the age old adage,

"We are only as strong as our weakest link!"

Whilst we can creatively utilize our passion and enthusiasm for our favored aspects of developing a practice, it is prudent to devote time to those aspects of business that don't necessarily excite us.

Only during the last two years have I become aware of how exclusive my focus on treatment and study has been.

As a practitioner there can be no argument that treatment and study should always form the nucleus of our core interests.

However, in the past my lackadaisical attitude towards administration, finances and investment has proven to be markedly detrimental towards realizing my dreams both within and without the profession.

Hopefully I can provide you with some inspiration and a few valuable insights born from my clinical experience and assist you in realizing the financial and creative freedom necessary to enjoy your life fully and take our profession to the next level.

There is virtually no recognition amongst our fellow profession's and the general public that Traditional Acupuncture is an extremely powerful and flexible modality in preventative medicine and healthcare, not singularly a method of pain control.

The quality and quantity of our communication as a profession despite the efforts of a passionate few, leaves plenty of room for improvement.

In essence we are specialists in our therapeutic fields and in many cases inadequately trained in other areas essential to establishing a successful acupuncture practice and there may be occasion where it is in your best interests to seek additional training in areas other than acupuncture e.g.

Book-keeping programs, marketing, advertising, desk top publishing, human relations etc, etc.

As an alternative to it is possible to enlist the services of people who specialize in these specific areas.

Regardless, it is important to have a basic working knowledge of the associated business skills required to develop a successful practice to ensure that your consultants are using the most expedient and cost-effective methods on your behalf.

To me a successful acupuncture practice means:

- *Growing as a practitioner in some way everyday.*
- *A majority of my patients experience successful treatment outcomes and those that don't, leave knowing that we have done our best.*
- *My staff is empathetic towards our patients, enjoy coming to work, love to laugh and feel free to do so.*
- *My associates and students are comfortable in the clinical environment and benefit from spending time in my practice.*
- *I have the energy, desire and inclination to work with people suffering from ill health, usually associated with acute and chronic pain.*
- *My schedule allows me to pursue some form of recreational activity, such as surfing, golf or when I feel indolent, photography.*
- *Having the time to enjoy social interaction independent of my practice, most importantly with my twin daughters and granddaughter.*
- *Being financially capable of pursuing my interest in investment real estate*
- *Having the opportunity to write books like this one.*
- *Attending or conducting at least three continuing education workshops per year.*
- *Last but certainly not least being able to afford to take the time off to have a least one significant holiday per year.*

Quality communication.....lifeblood of a successful practice.

This is the case for just about every business in existence.

As practitioners of traditional acupuncture we are in an unusual and unique position as a business.

Nearly everybody knows a little about what we do, very little!

The unfortunate consequence of such circumstances is that most people have an opinion about acupuncture and not necessarily an opinion based on personal experience.

As is want in this day and age bad news tends to outrun the good news, resulting in a strong perception amongst the general public that because we use needles, acupuncture will be painful or the very least, significantly uncomfortable.

There is very little conjecture about the gentle, more superficial techniques.

Hollywood is alive and well and the truth should never get in the way of a good story.

The misconception that needles should penetrate inches into the body as a matter of course is liberally fertilized in the movies on a surprisingly regular basis.

Accordingly, there is an alarmingly high level of ignorance outside of our profession regarding the classical underpinnings of our art/science.

A vast majority of the general public believe that acupuncture hurts and have absolutely no idea of the fundamental principles upon which our medicine is based.

We definitely have our work cut out to change that perception.

There are many and varied applications of the World Wide Web to assist you in educating your patients, their families, friends and associates.

One a more personal level, at almost every social function that I attend, upon the person learning that I am an acupuncturist the first question is

' How does it work?

Followed by, 'Does it hurt?'

I believe that it is in their and our best interests to tell them and much, much more, using every means at our disposal.

Dollars and sense.

Money is not everything in life, but it definitely goes a long way towards providing us with more choices about how we go about living.

Whilst our motivation in practice is not singularly to make money it is impossible for us to continue to provide the service that we do without taking full responsibility for the financial predicament of our practices.

That entails more than making ends meet.

It necessitates us making a profit from our business, doing so enables us to sow the seeds of prosperity.

I believe that this aspect of being in practice is crucial.

It is imperative for us as practitioners to engender the basic philosophies of Oriental medicine within our practices.

It is equally imperative that in doing so we generate sufficient profits to enable the constant growth of our businesses.

As I am sure that you know according to Oriental medicine the state of stasis is problematical in any energetic entity, including business.

Any energetic entity that remains static will eventually go into decline and it is this principle that I believe should be employed when we approach that sometimes awkward, occasionally malevolent, preferably benevolent energetic entity called 'business'.

Profitable Investment..... a key to prosperity.

After almost 20 years in practice, at the turn of the century I found myself in a difficult financial predicament.

It seemed that no matter how hard I worked I had an extremely difficult time accumulating any significant assets.

A number of factors combined to bring this point home to me.

In Australia the folk of my generation were raised on the idea that we worked hard all our lives, retired and the government gave us a lovely little social security payment every two weeks and everybody lived happily ever after.

The further we get into the 21st century the further this scenario disappears into the sunset.

I am sure that the situation in the United States is a somewhat exaggerated version of that which now exists in Australia.

The government is continually putting my generation on notice that social security benefits for the aged will become a thing of the past.

Each and every one of us will be *personally responsible for our financial welfare in our later years.*

No question, this was a wake-up call from the political decision makers.

I went from becoming interested in generating some level of passive income to becoming very aware that unless I seriously bolstered my income then it was definitely possible that the final years of my life could be fraught with hardship and lack.

This is certainly not what I had envisaged as an enthusiastic graduate.

Whilst this might not be of any great importance to you at this time in your life, there can be no question that negligence and *irresponsibility at a financial level especially when we are self employed can in the medium to long-term cause burnout, much stress, anxiety* and affect our capacity as practitioners of traditional acupuncture.

Sadly, that can only mean serious financial distress which will in most cases, impact deleteriously on all other aspects of our life.

So it is absolutely vital that we put aside some of our profits on a regular basis to create some level of regular passive investment income and allow us a degree of choice in our futures.

Treatment outcomes..... cream on the cake or jam on the floor.

It is obvious that positive treatment outcomes are an integral part of establishing a successful practice.

Whilst this is the case it is also important to make the most out of negative treatment outcomes.

Rather than getting depressed and dissatisfied with our lack of skill and understanding with problematic treatment outcomes, it is in our patient's best interests to utilize the resultant dissatisfaction to motivate ourselves to study, research and practice in every effort to improve as practitioners and bring about a more positive treatment outcome in similar situations.

Happy customers..... happy days.

Whilst acknowledging that positive treatment outcomes are the fundamental basis for any successful practice, I also believe it is very important to provide quality service for our clients.

Within reason I will do whatever it takes for my patient to feel safe and comfortable in clinic.

I spend a considerable amount of time tending the gardens surrounding my clinic not only deriving personal pleasure but in the hope that our visitors will be soothed by the colorful flowers and luscious greenery.

My staff and assistants are also of the same volition.

Communication and punctuality for mine are vital ingredients in ensuring that the patient feels acknowledged and cared for during and after treatment.

I want to get to know the patient but always do my best to ensure that they dictate how much and how fast I get to know them, in fact whether I get to know them at all.

There are ways and means of getting around most people to understand where they are coming from and what their suffering and/or discomfort might mean to them.

Needless to say, there are exceptions and it is imperative in my mind to respect my patient's privacy to the utmost.

Make sure at the end of each treatment that you or an assistant establishes just how the patient feels and encourage feedback from the patient between treatments should the outcome be less than positive.

To mentor or not to mentor.....that is the question.

Teaching is a powerful form of learning and learning is a powerful form of teaching.

Over the last 10 years I have overseen in excess of a hundred students and practitioners who have attended my clinic to observe and learn.

It is imperative for those people coming to my clinic to learn, that they participate in some way!

It does not matter in what, way, shape or form that this takes place but it does set a precedent regarding the learning process in the clinical setting.

The age-old idiom might apply,

'In the act of giving lies the magic of receiving.'

It is this ancient and wonderful principle that underpins the mentoring process in my clinics.

During the last decade there has been an explosion in my knowledge and understanding of traditional acupuncture in conjunction with an intense development of my skill levels.

This no doubt that this is the result of being exposed to both sides of the coin, teaching and learning, simultaneously.

On one hand I had adopted a mentor and had senior colleagues prepared to put in many hours guiding me through those novice years of exponential development as I hit the third phase of my career.

On the other hand the mentoring role that I inherited by virtue of the fact that was lecturing at an undergraduate level in two different institutions kept me extremely honest and forced me to study hard, develop my communication skills and practice, practice, practice.

As a clinical rather than purely theoretical style of teacher I am still a little unsure as to whether I was motivated by my love for traditional acupuncture , my desire

to help the patient or the fear of embarrassing myself by not being able to walk my talk.

Sufficient to say that being mentored whilst simultaneously mentoring students turbocharged my learning curve.

I remain grateful to my mentors who showed inexhaustible patience and inexplicable empathy in putting up with me for so many years.

I might say the same for those unsuspecting students who spent endless hours with me at the veritable coal face of clinical practice.

Recreational activity..... a key to vitality.

I believe that it is vital as practitioners who are exposed to pain and suffering on a regular basis to recreate on a daily or bi-daily basis.

No doubt each of us has a very specific idea as to what type of recreation suit us best.

I tend to have phases of recreational activity.

For instance, when I lived in a temperate climate I pursued a very strong interest in the game of golf, including daily practice and playing at least weekly. The environment, activity and camaraderie all conspired to keep me present in time and helped salve my mind, body and soul of a the pain ridden reality of the clinical environment.

Since I'm not a particularly competent player of the game, my enjoyment stems as much from the beautiful environment.

Accepting the challenge inherent in this game has taught me a lot about putting the last shot behind me and focusing very much on the present.

I find the ability to stay present in time and the ability to focus clearly on the person in front of me an essential trait in clinic also.

Bush walking, trekking and leisurely walks along deserted beaches do good things for me.

One of the most exciting recreational pastimes that I have engaged in was crewing on a racing yacht, an exhilarating, challenging and at times a pretty damn scary activity.

But one thing for sure, my focus and attention was at all times anchored in the moment, any slipup at this level can have dire consequences.

Since I now live in a subtropical, coastal environment most of my recreational activities centre being immersed in the ocean.

Once again the primary factor is that my attention is required very much in the here and now.

The point I am trying to make here is that all of us will have individual recreational pastimes that suit us, however over the years it has become apparent to me that those pastimes that require some level of physical activity and total attention to the moment seem to fulfill many of the basic necessities required to maintain a balance in my life and reflects positively in my attitude and energy in clinic.

I do know that those times where I have allowed myself through sheer laziness, indifference or extreme circumstances to become slack in regards my recreational activity, the quality of my practice has certainly been affected.

You may not have the privilege of living in such an incredible natural environment.

Regardless, the principle remains the same, some level of physical activity on a regular basis will go a long way to extending your longevity and effectiveness as a practitioner of traditional acupuncture.

Recharging the batteries..... pina coladas down by the pool.

For mine it is of primary importance to ensure that I have the opportunity to enjoy at least one significant holiday per year.

Why?

Whilst treating patients can be extremely rewarding and not necessarily energy depleting, in my experience the day-to-day machinations of keeping the wheels on my business can be somewhat draining and over an extended period of time can whittle away at my core energy, leaving me in less than optimal shape to assist my patients.

In the southern winter of 2004 I was fortunate enough to travel to Fiji on a 14 day surfing holiday with an old friend.

Naturally as a practitioner of traditional acupuncture, I packed some tools of trade, just in case I might be able to be of assistance in emergencies or to help myself or my friend in case of injury, which I might add, is not so far-fetched when you think of large ocean swells crashing onto live Coral reefs.

Thanks to a reward program instigated by the institution from which I borrowed the money to purchase an investment property, my friend and I were able to stay in four and five-star resorts.

Certainly, this was a very different reality than that confronted by the locals, who exist very much closer the poverty line.

On our first day we traveled to a local surfing break and happened upon some of the local surfing crew who extended their unbounded hospitality and invited us back to their village to participate ceremonial drinking of traditional kava.

Whilst imbibing, it came to pass that I was an acupuncturist.

As a result, over the next two weeks some extraordinary events unfolded. Utilizing both acupuncture and moxabustion I treated many of the villagers suffering from a diverse range of aches and pains.

The patriarch of the family was suffering from an open, suppurating ulcer where his right patella once was.

A few of the local fishermen hampered by chronic dull, nagging lower back pain to helping many of the women of the village overcome fatigue and lethargy, whenever we visited, all required treatment and there was always a queue. My old friend thought I was crazy and counseled me about becoming exhausted, especially since I was supposed to be on holidays, however the opposite was true.

I was delighted to be of assistance and once more, had neither the need nor desire to charge for my services.

I also took the opportunity to teach one of the women of the village some rudimentary moxabustion skills, her enthusiasm and dedication to practice meant that she was fundamentally competent before our departure.

I was delighted that somehow in some way she would be able to benefit the fellow villagers particularly considering that there was no way that they could afford conventional medicine.

My friend and I had a window of opportunity to travel to one of the outer islands and surf one of the legendary waves of the Fiji Islands.

We stayed at a basic yet comfortable and hospitable surf camp.

Once again my occupation became known and I was fortunate enough to treat one of the owners of our accommodation who suffered from extremely severe insomnia.

Also, one of our fellow surfers had no cartilage in one of his knees and was suffering as a result of many big carving turns on some rather large waves.

His wife, also a surfer developed Fiji belly, a very unpleasant condition resulting in constant diarrhea, nausea and overwhelming lethargy.

With appropriate treatment I was able to give all of these good people either significant relief or as in the case of the woman with Fiji belly complete resolution from the discomfort.

At no stage did I think of charging for my services, I was on holidays!

The point I am making here is that doing these treatments underneath the palm trees did not exhaust me in any way shape or form, in fact I believe that performing these treatments actually energized me and added enormous depth to my vacation.

As an aside, I now have an open invitation to visit and stay at the Fijian surf camp free of charge and since our fellow surfers were from Hawaii, I also have accommodation and a car waiting for me whenever I choose to visit.

It's a beautiful thing, being a practitioner of traditional acupuncture!

Opening up.....inside and out

I believe continued professional education is immensely beneficial for us, professionally and personally.

It can be exercise for our minds, an opportunity to refine our skills and develop our understanding of this ancient and artful medicine or....we can turn our

attention to the very core of our medicine, cultivating the ability to open our hearts, an integral part of encouraging free flowing qi/ki .

I'm referring to quiet contemplation and emotive diligence but definitely not discouraging physical exercise.

Heart, is in my experience the molten rock upon which practice stands. Without this essential ingredient our success will always be limited by our thoughts, which in my case, can be limited indeed!

By exercising both our minds and bodies, opening our hearts and connecting with our patients as fellow human beings we can begin to open the doors to truly becoming practitioners Of Traditional Acupuncture

On not becoming lost in space.....A Master Plan for Reaching Your Full Potential.

We read about it all the time, yet how many of us take the time and make the effort to put together a solid plan of action.

In the early nineties I found myself in a very awkward situation, the mother of my children had passed away some years earlier and unfortunately we did not carry any life-insurance.

At the behest of my children some two years after their mother's untimely death I re-located my family with the intention of establishing a new life and a new practice thousands of miles away.

There was however, a serious glitch in my psyche and I struggled to come the terms, not only with the death of wife and the quiet devastation of my children but with the reality of treating patients whilst struggling to give them my full attention and focus due some powerful distractions within.

It was inevitable that I withdraw from the clinical setting and deal with my personal dilemmas and give away any pretense of being an effective practitioner whilst I was so preoccupied with my own pain and angst.

After six months of contemplating my own navel I had slithered down the proverbial snake, forgotten what a ladder looked like and was stony, cold broke. Plan, no, I had none but to survive that night or day.

It is with gratitude that I acknowledge the assistance of many good people without whose help I may still be floundering in my personal abyss.

I gradually rehabilitated myself with plenty of help to the point where I felt capable of giving my full and undivided attention to my patients.

In 1996 when I first established my current clinic I was prompted to create a business plan in order to borrow sufficient moneys to get underway.

So dutifully I carried out the task.

Fortunately, I did have a pretty clear vision of the type of practice that I wished to create.

At this stage my career I had been teaching at an undergraduate level for two years and had already successfully established a number of practices.

I sat down one day and thought long and hard about what it was that I wanted to create.

I knew that in some way, shape or form I wanted to assist new graduates to understand the power and flexibility of acupuncture in the truest sense.

Through clinical outcomes and ultimately the welfare of the patient.

So gradually my plan took shape.

I wanted a facility that allowed students to observe treatment and to participate in some way in the everyday running of the clinic.

Unlike that which I am currently suggesting that you do, upon completion I placed the plan in a folder and filed it away.

Some *five years later* whilst looking for something entirely unrelated I came across this plan.

Naturally I took some time out to read it and to my astonishment each and every feature of of my plan had come to pass.

Many undergraduates, recently graduated practitioners and a number of experienced practitioners had spent time with me in clinic and a majority had gone to establish successful practices.

This really drove home to me the importance of taking the time out to sit down and really clarify what it is that we wish to create.

Although I hadn't read the plan for some years (I absolutely do not recommend this strategy) the act of putting pen to paper or as we do in the 21st century, tap on the keyboard and save in our computers, proved to be an extremely powerful strategy and the results spoke for themselves.

I would like to use the analogy of sailing in an attempt to clearly explain the reasoning behind these words and clarify the purpose of a plan.

I go out and buy myself a magnificent boat, I place strategic advertisements to recruit a top line crew, I purchase all of the provisions required and install all the latest gadgetry available to assist me in plotting a course and ensuring our safety.

So what's the big deal!

We all gather onboard, departure is imminent, goodbyes are said, up go the sails and we or on our way.

There is one minor or is it a major problem, we have no clear idea of our destination.

How difficult does this make it to plot a course.

To successfully reach our destination we must know our destination, first and foremost and where it lies in relation to where we are right now.

In sailing, state of the art charts and satellite navigation assist past to plot an accurate course with the minimum of effort.

Realistically however, storms come and go, as does the wind, the currents and tides twist and turn, any number of unforeseen difficulties may beset us.

If we have the skill and expertise to use our charts and a clear idea of our destination, whenever a set of unforeseen circumstances prevail we have the best possible chance of re-plotting our course and reaching our destination in the foreseeable future.

There is absolutely no difference in business, rarely does anything go exactly to plan, however without a plan the propensity to get bogged down or stuck in the doldrums going around in aimless circles is right in our face.

We consume valuable resources and often end up putting in maximum effort for minimum returns.

For all practitioners in the business of being self employed this is definitely an avoidable waste of valuable energy that might otherwise be used for treating patients, study or promoting your practice.

The link that I have provided for you below will give you some valuable insights and resources to help you formulate a plan with some direction and clarity. You can take years off the process of establishing a successful practice simply by formulating a plan.

Go for it!

<http://www.businessplanarchive.org/>

CHAPTER 2.

QUALITY COMMUNICATION..... LIFE BLOOD OF A SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE.

As practitioners of traditional acupuncture we are in an unusual and unique position as a business.

Nearly everybody knows a little about what we do, little, very little!

The unfortunate consequence of such circumstances is that most people have an opinion about acupuncture and not necessarily one based on personal experience.

As is want in this day and age, bad news tends to outrun the good news, resulting in a strong perception amongst the general public that because we use needles our treatment will be necessarily painful or the very least, significantly uncomfortable.

In my clinic this is definitely not the case.

I am for ever grateful to have become aware of the power of many of the lighter needling techniques several years ago and my subsequent clinical experience has definitely verified that awareness.

Unfortunately, there is an alarmingly high level of ignorance and prejudice within our profession regarding the classical underpinnings of the lighter needling techniques our art/science.

Experience has shown me that there is a valid place for both deeper and lighter needling techniques in treatment.

Simply put, my average patient much prefers the lighter approach, especially when the results justify the means!

Seriously, a majority of the general public are under the unnerving impression that acupuncture hurts and the needles almost penetrate the organs.

They have absolutely no idea of the fundamental principles upon which our medicine is based and a greatly influenced by the mass media.

We definitely have our work cut out when comes to promoting acupuncture as a desirable treatment option.

A significant benefit of also using lighter techniques has been the willingness of many of my patients, including the elite athletes to use traditional acupuncture as a preventative/maintenance treatment on a regular basis.

In addition to helping the business, using a variety of needling techniques has definitely opened my mind regarding the therapeutic possibilities of traditional acupuncture.

If you are not already using some lighter needling techniques, I urge you to consider doing so.

After using exclusively deeper needling techniques for the first 12 years in practice, I can happily testify that the introduction of lighter needling techniques into my practice was one of the best career moves that I could have possibly me!

Back to communication and the general public.

Whilst the general public's perception of acupuncture as a painful process presents a serious challenge in establishing a successful acupuncture practice, working in our favor is the incredible curiosity aroused by topics such as Oriental Medicine and in particular, Acupuncture.

At social occasions, upon the person learning that I am an acupuncturist, the inevitable response is

'How Does Acupuncture Work?'

Does that question ring a bell for you?

I believe that it is in their and our best interests to tell them more, much, much, more about Traditional Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

After some years it can become just a little tiresome to verbally answer this question on a continual and repetitive basis.

Alternatively, the many and varied applications of the World Wide Web is available and can be an invaluable asset when it comes to educating our patients, their families, friends and associates.

We also have traditional vehicles for communication such as pamphlets, brochures, public workshops and lectures, signage and one of the most powerful, the word of mouth of our patient's, I suggest that you use all avenues available to you to implement a concerted educational program.

What is the aim of our communications?

1. Patients.

It is just so important to educate our patients regarding the scope, potential, power and possibilities of traditional acupuncture treatment,

Explanations of the Oriental medical philosophies related to their condition also provide an invaluable service to your patient.

Understanding their condition from the very different perspective of Oriental medicine can be very empowering.

The birth and subsequent growth of the information age has never been more obvious than in the clinical setting.

There is no doubt in my mind that a majority of my patients are becoming increasingly hungry to further their understanding of their current condition and how their bodies work from a traditional perspective.

Baby boomers are coming to the fore and it is no longer good enough to blindly accept the opinions of the so-called experts regarding our health.

As is evident through the media, en masse we are questioning the status quo in ever increasing numbers.

The willingness to take more responsibility for our health is growing on a daily basis.

The burgeoning interest in alternative/natural medicine is testimony to this trend. Many health professionals have recognized the situation and have responded in a proactive manner.

Examples of this phenomenon include the health food industry, the chiropractic profession and the fitness industry.

As I'm sure you're aware, the sales of organic produce, vitamins, minerals, nutritional supplements and tonics have literally exploded over the last decade.

I believe that the interest in and consumption of health-related products will grow exponentially over the next decade or two as the general public strive to increase their longevity and optimize their health without instantly ingesting pharmaceutical substances that may or may not have deleterious side-effects.

As Paul Zane Pilzer describes in his book 'The Wellness Revolution' <http://thewellnessrevolution.info/> the health maintenance and preventative medicine revolution is well and truly under way.

As individual practitioners it is vital to our efforts to create a successful or more successful Traditional Acupuncture Profession to give the community the opportunity to benefit from the wisdom encapsulated in the ancient principles and philosophies that form the cornerstone of traditional oriental medicine.

By doing so, not only are we giving each individual recipient of relevant information an opportunity to understand the function of their bodies and their resultant health status from an entirely different perspective, we are creating educated ambassadors for our profession.

2. Allied modalities.

We should leave no stone unturned in our efforts to effectively communicate with practitioners of allied modalities regarding the complementary nature of our treatments.

Certainly from my experience any in-depth understanding of our modality is very rare amongst our fellow health professionals.

The mere concept of working with energy (Ki/Qi) can be a slippery ladder to climb when communicating with others.

Analogies using the movement of water when explaining the movement of energy within the body, relating the function of the automobile radiator when explaining the cooling action of kidney yin energy and how important a role that energy plays in maintaining the integrity of the heart.

I am sure that you have some handy analogies of your own.

Regardless of your respondent's stature in another modality, it is vital to assume that they think they know more than they actually do.

As with the general public many members of our allied professions have little if any real functional knowledge of traditional oriental medicine.

Helping others to garner an understanding of the internal/external connections through the extraordinary of Meridian pathways is in my experience a great place to start.

Maps of the body's energetic pathways are freely available to all and familiar to many.

A significant number of allied health professions have a structural or biochemical foundation.

Be aware that in some cases practitioners understanding of energetic medicine may be distinctly limited.

Of course, there will be situations where our efforts through verbal, graphic and written communications go unrewarded.

In situations such as these we have a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the efficacy of our medicine.

Our clinical skills can come to the fore and treatment outcomes are of primary interest to all concerned.

We may not be able to effectively communicate all of the fundamentals of Traditional Acupuncture but by demonstrating our clinical efficacy, a desire to effectively communicate, willingness to work together and to cross refer patients you can usually get your foot in the door and begin to create a stronger referral network.

There can be no doubt that the more information, understanding and awareness that we can convey to our fellow health professionals will be reflected by the number of opportunities that we are given to demonstrate the efficacy, power and flexibility of Traditional Acupuncture through referral.

The opportunity to treat patients referred by health professionals from other modalities brings into play a third dimension based specifically on treatment outcomes.

In other words, 'we get to walk the talk'.

It is prudent in these situations for us to make a serious effort to understand the priorities of the referring practitioner whilst keeping uppermost in our mind the needs of the patient.

The referring practitioner has the best interests of their patient at heart, hence the referral.

In some cases they will be expecting a specific therapeutic response from the patient to our treatment.

Obviously, if the patient is referred to us to help resolve painful sciatica and we treat only distal points, it is imperative that we communicate to both the patient and referring practitioner some understanding as to why we are not actually treating the affected area.

In my experience it is best to give ourselves some leeway regarding prognosis allowing for the possibility that our first treatments may or may not hit the spot.

Once again it is important to communicate to the patient a fundamental understanding of their condition from our unique perspective.

We should also enlighten them regarding possible treatment outcomes.

Our explanation, whilst not negating the possibilities of an outstanding response to treatment or one treatment wonder, should allow for the possibility of gradual improvement.

I have found it helpful to explain patients, that in most instances disease begins at an energetic level and it is this discordance that gradually erodes their overall health status and is eventually reflected in the dysfunction of their vital organs or musculoskeletal system.

Therefore, when the problem exists at a structural or organ level it can take some time to rectify.

Patients usually relate to this concept and make essential adjustments to their expectations.

Remembering that some of these patients will have tried everything under the sun in an effort to recover their health and their patience not to mention their hip pocket will have been sorely tested.

Commonly, their confidence has been eroded through the continued disappointment in other modalities failing to rectify their health issues.

As a consequence their limited faith can carry over as querulous cynicism regarding the suitability and efficacy of Traditional Acupuncture and Oriental medicine in effectively resolving an often painful and debilitating condition.

I have found it beneficial to reassure the patient that I will put in a 100% effort towards achieving a satisfactory resolution and relieve their pain and discomfort.

Finally, where possible I will always report my understanding of the patient's condition and prognosis to the referring practitioner.

As an aside it is preferable to listen carefully to the referring practitioner's diagnosis not only will this help in the treatment of the patient but will greatly assist in translating our diagnosis into a more easily understandable language, thereby increasing the referring practitioner's confidence in and understanding of Traditional Acupuncture.

3. Peers and Colleagues.

Our capacity and willingness to communicate with our peers and colleagues within the profession can result in the formation of productive and creative networks of like-minded practitioners.

It is important to keep the lines of communication open within our profession.

Not only does it encourage confidence in each other, it consolidates an awareness of the successes and failures of our fellow practitioners and will go a long way towards ameliorating the sense of aloneness that often comes hand-in-hand with being a practitioner of Traditional Acupuncture.

I know that in my case, when referring patients to other practitioners it gives me a great deal of confidence to have an awareness of their diagnostic acumen and clinical skills, enabling me to alert the patient or referring practitioner to any obvious differences in clinical approaches and needle techniques that might exist, disarming if you like, any anxiety that the patient or referring practitioner may feel but does not necessarily express.

Getting together as a group of students/practitioners can be a lot of fun.

Sometimes inspiring, almost always very stimulating, providing us with the unique opportunity to receive honest and accurate feedback from our peers.

Such feedback can only improve our diagnostic, moxabustion and needling skills.

In short these sessions provide a golden opportunity to stoke the fires and resonate with folk who actually understand what we're talking about, that in itself can be incredibly comforting and relaxing.

Over 100 monthly study groups has personally reinforced that this is no spurious notion.

There are many other possibilities as a result of such gatherings.

The age-old adage that many minds are better than one implies that creativity and inspiration can result from a gathering of like-minded people.

Promotionally and clinically this makes great sense.

4. The General Public.

Regarding communication, I believe that it is in this arena that we should be focusing most of our attention and energy.

For it is here at the grassroots level that fundamental changes can be made in the level of awareness and attitude towards our medicine.

Not only will our efforts be rewarded through our individual practices, it is an absolute must if our profession is to reach its full potential within the current healthcare system in the first half of this century.

For mine the two most vital components of the success of such efforts are:

A). A relatively pain-free and comfortable treatment regime resulting in positive clinical outcomes for a vast majority of our patients.

There can be no escaping the fact that we need to deliver the goods.

Without consistently positive treatment results we may be able to sham our way through for a while but those quintessential ingredients of working life, satisfaction and longevity along with our patients, eventually go missing. Our energy or Qi/Ki, the vital ingredient upon which the most potent form of Traditional Acupuncture depends eventually goes the same way. The result is often a decline in positive treatment outcomes along with clinical and personal burnout as our Qi/Ki becomes stuck and increasingly stagnant.

B). Unrelenting but never intrusive efforts to assist our patients in achieving a fundamental understanding of how acupuncture works in conjunction with the elevation of their awareness of the amazing variety of conditions that can be successfully treated with Traditional Acupuncture.

a) One-on-One Communication with our patients

Effective face-to-face communication can go a long way towards reinforcing the positive benefits of successful treatment.

It can be a great asset to be able to verbally explain to our patients the machinations behind successful treatment through clear and simple explanation of the underlying philosophies of our medicine such as:

The 8 Principles.

Yin/Yang

Exterior/Interior

Cold/Heat

Deficiency/Excess

The principles of the five elements theory, particularly, when related to the seasons definitely strikes a familiar and resonating chord with the majority of my patients.

The possibilities are endless as the wisdom in the "Yellow Emperor's classic" or Su Wen.

Try discussing the possibility that relaxing and pleasurable exercise as distinct from a totally intense routine, devoid of joy and excitement can add an extra dimension to people's lives.

Using the five elements theory to explain why relaxed and pleasurable exercise can go so far towards improving our health can be most illuminating for both practitioner and patient.

Relating the functions and dysfunctions of the zang-fu (internal organs) according to TCM theory is a hit with many of my patients, giving them another perspective and more understanding of their situation.

Another great source of fascination and interest for patients is the interaction and relativity of the Meridian Pathways in the health and well-being of their internal as well as external functions.

Clearly relating these theories to our patients increases their awareness and understanding of how their bodies work and what is wrong with them according to Traditional Oriental Medical theory.

.....An inspirational moment for them and for us.

One thing for sure, it definitely makes our job so much easier both in the present and in the future.

Today, is a holiday, one of the many I have spent writing this book I received a phone call from a distressed patient (Sean), complaining of insomnia and feeling of fullness in the chest region.

As distinct from when he first sought treatment, he now had plenty of energy and no longer suffered from the constant exhaustion, desire to sleep, lack of

appetite and continual anxiety that he had experienced constantly for almost 12 months prior to commencing acupuncture treatment.

I invited Sean to come around to the clinic immediately.

I actually stopped writing long enough to take his pulse, ask a few pertinent questions and treat.

Upon taking his pulse my suspicions were confirmed, a couple of very late nights and some heavy partying had taken its toll on Yin Qi/Ki of his kidney energy and the cooling and contracting function of his body had gone on holiday.

As a consequence there was an abundant amount of pernicious heat trapped in his upper jiao/heater.

As the treatment unfolded we chatted about his condition.

He confided to me that in his previous relationship that he had been deeply disturbed to suffer from recurring violent dreams involving his girlfriend.

I tended to him the following explanation.

Simply put, the cooling apparatus or radiator of his body (Kidney Yin Qi/Ki) had become deficient and was malfunctioning.

The resultant excessive heat did exactly the same on the inside of his body as it would in the outside world, it radiated outwards and upwards.

In his case it was disturbing the heart/pericardium, his shen.

I explained to him how this misplaced heat, resulting from the cooling dysfunction had overheated the upper part of his body causing a similar restless state as that when suffering from fever, triggering excessive and sometimes violent dreams.

When he realized that the dreams were a result of a fundamental imbalance in his body and not exclusively the product of his 'dark side', the burden of guilt that he had borne was immediately lifted, his spirits rose, the treatment outcome, enhanced and he was greatly empowered by this new understanding.

Gratefully, my treatment was very effective.

His chest area, the heat, agitation and anxiety were fully resolved.

In addition to this favorable clinical outcome, his expanded awareness and understanding will go a long way towards improving his self-worth and provide him with a barometer that will tell him when he has overdone it.

That being the case the likelihood of him seeking treatment earlier rather than later has increased dramatically.

In addition his confidence in Traditional Oriental Medicine has taken a quantum leap and his willingness to refer his friends and family for treatment has increased exponentially, the positive byproduct of clear face-to-face communication.

b) Printed Media

In addition to face-to-face contact with patients the opportunity of consolidating the educational process via printed media is an opportunity too good to miss.

I believe regular monthly, bimonthly or seasonal newsletters to be excellent promotional and educational vehicles.

Pamphlets explaining how acupuncture can be of benefit in the treatment of a particular disease state can be most effective.

Individual pamphlets for common conditions such as arthritis, headaches, low back pain, sports injuries, insomnia, stress and anxiety, menstrual and menopausal conditions, pre-and post natal care, Attention Deficit Syndrome, teething, tummy problems can be excellent way of expanding people's awareness of the many and varied health disorders that respond well to Traditional Acupuncture treatment.

If beneficial, well-written and presented, not only will our patients read the newsletters but family, friends and workmates will do likewise, particularly if our patients have experienced pain-free and effective treatment.

You might check with your association as to whether they produce this type of material, it can save considerable expense and time.

Another approach commonly used is sending the patient a card on their birthday.

Apart from reminding them of the benefits they enjoyed as a result of treatment, it is a pleasant goodwill gesture.

It is also possible to send notices to your patients regarding their seasonal, half yearly or annual checkup, while simultaneously educating them about the efficacy of Traditional Acupuncture as a preventative medicine.

The downside of the printed media is that it can be quite an expensive exercise. Postage, stationery, ink, wear and tear on the printer and wages or our time in labor, all add up.

An essential element of this kind of educational campaign is the capacity to measure the reader's response to different articles or sections of your communication.

Through this response mechanism you should be able to distinguish between what does and does not interest your reader.

Enabling you to continually refine your material and further satiate your patient's curiosity about how Traditional Acupuncture works and what conditions it works best for.

c) Electronic Media

There can be no question that the further we move into the 21st century the more dependent upon the World Wide Web we become.

I must confess to being a reluctant starter in the world of computers and the Internet, it wasn't until 1997 that I finally succumbed to the lure of instant communication.

What is apparent to me now is the incredible expediency and vast economic advantages of communicating via the net rather than the pony express.

Email

One of the key elements of my current communication strategy is the further development of a comprehensive database and the introduction of relatively advanced software and technology.

It can be frustrating to learn to learn our lessons from arduous experience, especially in my case when it involves anything to do with computers or software.

Due to my relative novice status in the cyber world it was only after carefully recording all the details of each and every patient that I had treated over the last several years in addition to compiling a detailed mailing list of practitioners and

students who have participated or shown interest in the postgraduate educational programs that I have conducted or hosted over the last decade did I discover that even though I had carefully identified and distinguished between patients and practitioners/students whilst recording this information, when it came time to do a mail out the program that I was running was incapable of categorizing according to the identifiers that I had religiously put in place.

In other words for the purpose of communication this program was virtually useless.

Although fundamentally a book keeping program, I was absolutely astonished to find those hours and hours of menial work had been very close to a total waste of time.

This experience and other similar hair raising, liver churning examples of my inexperience in software led me to the discovery of an incredibly powerful and functional program specifically designed for ease of communication with optimum automation.

It can be frustrating to learn solely from bitter experience, so please allow me to encourage you to spend a few more dollars now on a proven specialist program as a means of communicating and educating your patients.

Click on the link below and enter a Pandora's Box of e-mailing programs.

I unhesitatingly recommend this exceptional software and urge you to examine its extraordinary capabilities, now.

<http://www.marketingtips.com/mailloop/t.x/824488>

Any additional capital outlay is minimal when compared to the potential patient education opportunities and insignificant, when compare to the ongoing and repetitive costs of sending communications via the pony express.

Should you decide to run with the option of electronic media make sure that on the front page of your patient record sheets you have space for your patient to record their e-mail address and I think it is a good idea to give them the option of receiving valuable information that could benefit their health by asking the question and providing a box for them tick if they wish to.

The contents of your electronic newsletter need not vary from those of the printed kind.

Website.

Web sites are fast becoming a necessary part of being in practice.

You do not have to have an expensive web site, dollars and sense indicate that the primary function of your web site will be to serve as an extrapolated electronic business card.

That being the case I would definitely encourage you to include a photograph of yourself.

Let people know who you are, where you are, what you do and why you do it. Just don't forget who your site is about.

Your patients rule!

It is of an utmost priority to clearly communicate to your current and prospective patients the benefits for them in seeking treatment from you.

What makes you unique, what inspires you, give them a little piece of yourself not just Tech talk and jargon.

Giving the reader a slightly more intimate view of yourself and including a friendly photograph serves to bring a more human touch to your site, hopefully reflecting the comfort and warmth of your practice on earth.

Traditional acupunctures uniqueness lies in its capacity to convey warmth and comfort through the application of moxabustion and gentle acupuncture.

For those of you who live in the more temperate regions on the planet, conveying this feeling through your web site would be an attribute indeed.

Technology

Several years ago I made the business changing decision to buy my first computer and learn more about information technology and the Internet.

What a great decision!

Today, you can instantaneously receive a copy of this e-book, without me lifting finger.

The potential for us to make a difference as individual practitioners has grown exponentially with the advent of the Internet.

I cannot urge you strongly enough to utilize this incredibly efficient and effective technology to your fullest advantage when communicating with your patients past, present and future.

d) Educational Workshops for Patients

Over the years I have experimented with educational workshops for patients, with limited success.

Having gathered together a group of more than four or five people in a workshop setting the difficulties involved in communicating to each of the individuals the intricacies of their particular condition whilst keeping the other members of the group interested often outweighed any advantage that I may have managed to accrue.

That was some years ago and in all honesty I have not been inspired to walk down that road again, particularly with the excellent options available to educate our patients today.

By all means if you think that the benefits could outweigh the detriments in your situation, give it a shot.

At the very minimum you will get instantaneous feedback regarding your subject matter and the effectiveness of your communication.

Any snoring or yawning is a clear indication that you have not hit the mark! Applause and whistling might indicate that you have some serious career options.

e) Workshops for Specific Interest Groups

This is another kettle of fish entirely.

I believe there is a great deal of merit in conducting workshops and educational talks with groups that have a strong common interest.

Support Groups for those suffering from chronic illness

Many communities have support groups for people suffering from a specific illness.

Fibromyalgia, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Arthritis, Migraine Headaches, Attention Deficit Syndrome, pre-and postnatal classes are but a few examples, a little research on your behalf will uncover many more.

In many cases people suffering from these conditions are bewildered with the sometimes vague and almost always difficult to understand explanations for their situation provided by orthodox medicine.

No, I am not saying it is irrelevant, what I am saying is that many patients have serious difficulties comprehending the explanations of orthodox medicine regarding their condition.

In some cases it is simple enough to explain what the condition is but it is entirely different kettle of fish when it comes to explaining why the condition is.

Traditional Oriental medicine is tailor made to provide another perspective and some understanding for those actually suffering.

I suggest that you fully utilize these fundamental principles to give all present at your workshop the opportunity to understand their current condition from an entirely new perspective.

It is usually best in these situations to explain to your audience that long term solutions require a regular and committed treatment plan.

Often these people are incapacitated to some degree and in many cases may be unable to hold down a full-time job, in other words they may be struggling financially and the thought of committing to long-term treatment can be little frightening for them.

If I can see that they are genuine in their desire to give treatment their best shot I will invariably tailor an affordable treatment package for them.

To me it is far more important to step up to the plate and give it my best shot than to hold out for more dollars and less sense.

In the early days of practice, I believe it is far better to have patients moving in and out on a regular basis, even if you have to take a pay cut, than sitting on your backside wondering where all the patients are.

In these circumstances it bodes well to remember that these people have family and friends who in most cases, (especially when dealing with people suffering from long term, chronic, pain or illness), will watch with great interest the

progress that your patient makes as they undergo a course Of Traditional Acupuncture.

Sporting Teams, Associations and Individuals

Over the years I have been privileged to be associated with a number of sporting teams and individuals.

Olympic, recreational and full time professional, all manner, shape and size of athlete have attended my clinic for treatment.

In many cases, particularly in the early days of my practice, they have been looking for the resolution of a stubborn injury that has failed to respond adequately to orthodox treatment.

A few years after integrating lighter needling techniques into my practice I started treating an Olympic distance swimmer.

He required assistance, primarily for a defunct immune system and secondarily for chronic shoulder problems.

Prior to commencing treatment he had been plagued by the onset of flu like symptoms towards the business end of swim meets.

This had been the case for a couple of years.

He competed specifically in individual 200metre, 400metre and 1500metre freestyle events including various relays and for many years was an important member of the Australian swimming team.

To cut a long story short he had previously won Olympic silver and bronze medals.

He was struggling and it looked very much like he would not make the 2000 Olympic team.

With the introduction of traditional acupuncture into his training regime, his health improved remarkably, his fitness level and performances in the pool followed suit and he won his elusive gold medal in the 200 metre relay at the 200 games.

This is the sort of PR that can really benefit a practice.

I have been involved with athletic groups, cyclists, rugby clubs, cricket associations, rodeo riders, Australian baseball team and currently spend a lot of time working with one of the leading Australian Rules Football teams.

I am grateful to say, my credibility and that of traditional acupuncture continues to grow as a result of these relationships.

I would unhesitatingly urge that you seek out sporting clubs and teams in your local community and offer your services as a practitioner of traditional acupuncture.

From experience I can assure you that acupuncture is a wonderful adjunct to orthodox treatment and one of the most powerful non drug performance enhancing treatments available today.

CHAPTER 3.

DOLLARS AND SENSE.... WHAT MORE CAN I SAY?

Where to begin when establishing an acupuncture practice.

We are usually most financially vulnerable at the very beginning of our careers.

After spending thousands of dollars, four years working part-time to make ends meet and studying full-time at college or university obtaining the required education, establishing a practice can be a rather daunting task.

Without a few years of practice under your belt and solid figures behind you, it will be very difficult to borrow sufficient money to establish an independent practice, let alone buy a freehold property.

Purchasing freehold property outright

Caution, you need to be 100% clear about your numbers and have plenty of entrepreneurial drive to succeed with this strategy.

Only a privileged few have sufficient assets and capital to purchase a property upon graduating.

If you are very together in a business sense you may be able to formulate a strong enough business plan to take out a mortgage, buy a freehold property and start your business.

It can be difficult, read well-nigh impossible to create this scenario without strong financials to support your loan application.

With a rock solid business plan you may be able to create the opportunity to borrow funds to both purchase a property and establish a successful practice.

If you choose to go this way please be aware of the enormous financial pressure that can be created by the necessity of making substantial mortgage payments every month.

You will need to create a strong budget accordingly.

The unwary can be financially compromised in the blink of an eye, putting the skids on a burgeoning career before it has an opportunity to get off the ground.

If, after doing your sums and taking suitable professional advice, you are absolutely confident that you have sufficient capital and the ability to generate adequate cash flow to undertake such an exercise, go for it!

Before contemplating such a venture, make sure that you go to the relevant local authorities and ensure that the planning regulations for your community allow you to conduct business from the premises.

I know, it sounds simple and is totally logical but I know a number of people who have fallen into the trap of signing up for a property based on a verbal assurance from the vendor, real estate agent or even the local authority themselves, that all is well, only to be underdone by an administrative oversight or the odd coincidental sleight of hand, been unable to substantiate the validity of the advice received and subsequently lost a veritable financial arm and leg as a result.

To avoid such dilemmas I suggest that before you sign any contracts you include an escape clause stating that, *'purchase of the property is subject to relevant approvals being granted by the local/State authorities.'*

As purchaser you are entitled to place any conditions that you like in the contract.

It is up to the vendor as to whether they accept your conditions.

You will want to be in a position to generate cash flow immediately upon opening the doors of your practice.

This is a must when it comes to paying off a substantial mortgage in addition to all the other establishment and running expenses.

It can be to your advantage to have an extend escrow, allowing you to put all the necessary pieces in place, get relevant approvals and put together an effective promotional campaign, prior to making your mortgage payments.

In short, doing everything possible to ensure that the day you open your doors for business you are swinging the bat not still looking for it.

I cannot urge caution enough if you're going to take this path, whilst you may have the assets and credentials to borrow the money to purchase the property, you must do a comprehensive budget to ensure that you will have adequate cash flow to cover all running expenses and some left over for a rainy day.

Oh, did I mention that you must have the necessary drive and determination to forego a couple of annual holidays and keep the doors of your clinic open for the absolute maximum period possible, including the possibility of working on weekends.

Another strategy if you have a solid business background, sufficient entrepreneurial blood in your veins and bagfuls of common sense is to formulate a very strong business plan and canvass practitioners from other modalities, investors and your local philanthropist regarding their potential participation or financial investment in your project.

Pursuing a private investor, silent partner or not so silent partner is a viable alternative to carrying the full financial liability yourself.

You will need all of your financial and human management skills to make this style of venture, work.

Going down this track will require you to have a very clear understanding of the bottom line, with very few exceptions, potential business associates and investors will pull out their magnifying glasses when it comes to investing their \$\$\$.

Capital gain on property, especially of the commercial kind can be considerable and down the track you can realize that capital gain through a line of credit, preferably to reinvest in income producing investments, such as property not to purchase a speedboat or flash new car.

Psssst, a final word regarding purchasing property.

'Do your market research before the fact not after.'

You should fully understand the community that you are buying into.

Be certain that an adequate percentage of the local and surrounding population have sufficient disposable income to utilize your services.

Leasing property.

For many of us this will be the only realistic possibility for creating our own clinic. The major difference to buying a property is that you are not required to invest such significant amounts of cash to open the doors of your practice.

This enables you to devote more of your hard earned dollars to fitting out, market research, promotion, your wages, staff wages and most importantly having sufficient money put aside to cover any shortfalls in cash flow that you might experience in the initial stages of your practice. Still an intimidating amount of \$\$\$, particularly when you have just graduated.

The basic principles for leasing will be similar to purchasing the property. Two significant differences are:

On the plus side the owner is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the building in addition to local taxes.

On the minus side as lessee you do not reap the rewards of capital gain and upon completion of your lease, you are at the mercy of the landlord regarding continuity of your tenancy.

Once again, it is prudent to *'Do your market research before the fact not after.'* The length of your lease is very important.

It can take a considerable amount of time to establish your practice. This is usually dependant upon your personal drive, willingness to put in the required effort and make the necessary sacrifices. Taking these factors into account, providing you have done your research thoroughly and are still confident of the potential of your location, I usually recommend the longer lease as the better option.

In my current practice I am nearing the end of a 10-year lease. This was broken up into two five-year periods.

My initial lease was for five years with a five-year option to renew at my discretion not the landlord's.

One of the major advantages my long-term lease is that annual rental increases are capped to inflation rates.

Longer term leases are good value from a business point of view as they encourage the perception of permanency from a patients perspective thus assisting us to build a solid client base

Of course you may sign up for shorter periods, however this can be fraught with difficulty.

The landlord has the option of significantly increasing your rent or worse, terminate your lease, real downers especially if your practice is just taking off.

I recommend that the minimum period of your lease be three years, preferably with a three-year option to renew for the same rental indexed to inflation.

Before signing any lease it is in your best interests to thoroughly investigate the rules and regulations of your local authorities regarding the legalities of conducting a healthcare practice on the premises.

Sole Lessee

By going down this track you enjoy far greater freedom to do what you want, when you want and how you want.

However, this freedom comes at a cost, you are solely responsibility for ensuring that the rent gets paid on time, all the time, for X number of years.

If you are contemplating becoming a sole lessee make absolutely certain that you can sublet to other practitioners or related professions, preferably from Allied healthcare modalities or businesses.

Dual Lease.

There are a number of advantages to co-leasing with another individual or organization, particularly the spreading of any financial burden.

Another significant benefit is the inbuilt support mechanism available to each of the partners in the event of any sort of crises.

The age old adage, 'two heads are better than one', definitely holds water, especially regarding treatment outcomes and can be invaluable for marketing and promotional ideas, not to mention administrative duties.

In most circumstances having only the one partner on your lease is more manageable than being responsible to and for a larger number of partners.

I strongly advise that in any business arrangement you enter into that you put it down in writing in as much detail is possible and get all parties to cosign.

This is imperative when it comes to sorting out disagreements which can arise over a period of years when in any sort of business partnership

Multi Tenancy Lease

A *multi tenancy lease*, in other words each of the different practitioners or tenants are signatories on the primary lease.

Advantages of this type of arrangement include the spreading of responsibility and hopefully a very strong commitment to the success of the centre.

Disadvantages include the fact that any of the signatories can be individually held responsible for the payment of the rent for the entire term of the lease.

It is very difficult for me to recommend this particular structure. You are totally financially exposed and may become solely responsible for any debts evolving from the lease, regardless of the circumstances.

If, after much soul searching and research you are convinced that such a structure is viable, handle with caution and ensure that you have sufficient funds to cover any eventuality including the disappearing co-lessee/s.

Believe me it can and does happen!

Sub-letting in an established multimodality practice.

Of all the options available to the newbie practitioner this would be the avenue that I recommend as being the most economically feasible.

From a financial perspective it makes enormous sense, your capital outlay is minimal, the opportunities for marketing and promotion are unlimited and your weekly overheads less daunting.

Cross referral can be a very supportive environment for your patients and the practitioners.

With a comprehensive agreement in place there is usually minimal disharmony and maximum cooperation for the mutual benefit of all parties concerned.

Working from home.

This can be very economical solution to setting up a practice.

Since we all have to live somewhere it is advantageous to make only the one rental or mortgage payment.

There are obvious drawbacks from a lifestyle perspective as a result of the inevitable crossover of our personal and professional lives.

The bottom line is that this arrangement must be a financially viable option to compensate for your loss of privacy and please ensure that your home practice complies with the local authorities regulations.

Living at work.

In most cases this style of location is more suitable for single folk, depending of course on size of the premises.

In saying that, I know a number of practitioners who have successfully lived with their families, on location at their professional premises.

As is the case of working from home you are virtually halving your rental or mortgage outlay, always a good idea when setting up practice.

Purchasing an Already Established Practice.

This can be an expedient method of setting up a practice.

However, goodwill can be an extremely personal thing and there is no guarantee that the existing clientele of a practice that you are considering purchasing will continue their patronage after you have taken over.

I urge you to keep this uppermost in your mind and ensure that a majority of the purchasing price is linked directly to fixtures and fittings.

Whilst it is of some benefit to have an existing clientele base there can be no guarantees.

If all of the pieces fit and you decide that purchasing an already established practice is going to work for you, as a condition of sale, ensure that there is a cosigned exclusion clause guaranteeing that the vendor will not re establish practice within an agreed upon distance for X. number of years.

You should also enlist the support of the vendor in successfully communicating with current clientele regarding the changes underway in their practice.

Just as an aside, ensure that accompanying these vendor written communication/recommendation regardless of there form is a personal letter, e-mail or verbal communiqué from you.

It really does help to include a photograph of your smiling self.

Bookkeeping

For many practitioners this is the tacky part of being in business, the numbers game, fortunately or unfortunately is unavoidable.

If, like me, you chose Traditional Acupuncture as a career path that would enhance your understanding of life and how the wheels have turned for more than two millenniums in conjunction with a strong desire to help people, then you may, like me have enormous resistance to the idea of spending many hours per week ensuring that your books are in order, the taxman has been paid, there is enough money in the bank next week to pay the rent and if you're fortunate enough to have staff, sufficient funds to ensure that you can pay them so they don't leave you on short notice.

For the first 15 years or so of my career all of the bookwork concerning my practice was done by hand, either by me or my receptionist/assistant.

By no means could I have described this as a pleasurable task, more like an essential task that when completed left me with a feeling of satisfaction that the job was done.

Whilst this is still possible in the 21st century, the system has changed and the number of hours required for me to complete the tasks involved has increased three to five fold.

To my mind this is an untenable situation for a practitioner of Traditional Acupuncture.

However it is definitely feasible to do the bookkeeping yourself for the first year or two of practice at least, but DO consult a specialist when you are setting up your books or computer software book keeping program.

This will go a long way to ensuring that the transition from doing the accounts yourself to employing a suitable consultant, when you are too busy practicing acupuncture, will be as painless as possible.

I have found it far less stressful, albeit a little more expensive to enlist the services of a qualified consultant to handle this veritable minefield of numbers.

By employing a specialist consultant for an average of four hours per month in conjunction with the fully automated bookkeeping software I have managed to keep my role in this particular area of my business to pretty much a supervisory one.

This has freed up my spare time allowing me to do further study and research, enjoy the ocean and the great outdoors, occasionally get cultural and of course write this book.

Budget

Regardless of whether you are in practice or preparing to establish one you should know your numbers.

As taking the pulse can give us significant insights into the energetic integrity of our patients, doing a budget for our business provides similar insights into its financial integrity.

Knowing where we are at financially at any given time allows us to make educated decisions regarding where we are to best spend our money.

I believe it is important to reinvest at least 10% of our gross income back into the practice, particularly in the first five years.

This way, regardless of our earnings we are nourishing the roots from whence our prosperity comes.

I would also suggest that a majority of the 10% that you put aside would be best spent on marketing and promotions.

This does not have to be a great deal of money, it is the reinforcing the habit or routine that is important.

Utilizing the same principle of tonifying ki/qi in a living being we use that 10% seed money and subsequent erstwhile communications to tonify our practices.

By reinvesting in ourselves we are applying one of the fundamental principles upon which our medicine is based.

In life we are in constant motion, either expanding or contracting, by reinvesting in ourselves we are going a long way to ensuring that the former is the predominant state of our practice.

Another option that I highly recommend as a routine or habit is putting aside at least 10% of the net income of your practice for passive income producing investments.

This strategy is vital to your medium to long-term prosperity.

There are many resources for budget guidelines on the net.

Just go to www.google.com and search "planning budget".

Number one rule for setting up in practice should be,
'always minimise your overheads.'

The trickiest part of the balancing act for the first few years in practice is ensuring that you have put aside sufficient funds to pay your taxation.

Make sure that you have some understanding of your tax system and know approximately how much cash you will need on hand to satisfy Uncle Sam or Cousin George.

CHAPTER 4.
LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION.
WHERE FOR ART THOU, YON PRACTITIONER?

The most expedient way that I can explain my perceptions of preferable locations is to recount my experiences from the perspective of the location of a few of my different practices over the years.

1984 – 1989.

A Country Practice.

My first practice was located in a small country town (pop.3000) at the local indoor sports centre.

By today's standards it was tardy to say the least.

But for six months it was the heart and soul of my first practice.

I sublet one room from the owners of the centre for a minimal rate.

Cell phones were not in existence in this area at the time and the owner was happy for me to use his phone number for incoming calls.
It was within walking distance of my home.

If need be, my late wife, Kayelene and I were able to do some part-time work, manually harvesting small crops to help make ends meet.

My overheads were virtually non-existent and I still say less is better in this regard.

I quickly realized that word-of-mouth advertising was without doubt the most powerful for promotion available for me.

In this small country town my family and I were strangers to 99% of the population.

I was obliged to find a way into the heart of the community, gaining their respect and trust personally was one thing, introducing them to Acupuncture was another thing entirely.

It was obvious that my premises although ultra economical did not reflect the necessary level of professionalism needed to encourage the local community to even consider this very strange, in some cases frightening and often referred to as barbaric art of Traditional Acupuncture.

In short I needed a more professional, centrally located and visible premises.
Lesson learnt.

A good example of saving a dime on overheads but it was costing me dollars in income.

It was time to bite the bullet and go cap in hand to my friendly bank.

I needed to borrow several thousand dollars dollar to make several more thousand dollars dollar.

One of the benefits of setting up practice in a small rural community is that with a little effort and a good attitude you can get know a lot of people in a short amount of time.

These are essential elements for survival on all levels in a town of this size.

I played a lot of sport in my adolescence years including cricket, rugby, surfing etc.

This then was the avenue open for me to introduce myself to the local community.

In small country towns it can be all too easy to remain an outsider, a very uncomfortable place to be if you want to establish a successful Acupuncture Practice.

So it happened that I joined one of the local cricket clubs, besides thoroughly enjoying the experience and reliving my youth the captain of my team was the accountant at my local friendly bank.

Let's just say that it did not harm my chances of getting a loan by being an enthusiastic member of said cricket team.

And it came to pass that my one room practice made way for a second fully air-conditioned premises with an office, waiting room and three treatment rooms.

These antiquated rooms had served as the local medical Centre during the Second World War and required substantial amount of time, money and effort to renovate satisfactorily.

It was situated in the main street of town at the very end of a small arcade.

I shared the arcade with a chemist/drugstore, a footwear shop, a butcher, hairdresser, small medical practice and in my actual premises, an optometrist.

As fate would have it my participation in sport brought about an invitation to join the local rugby club as a trainer.

I was paid \$300 for the entire season, April to September.

Two nights per week I dedicated to attending training sessions, strapping player's ankles, knees, shoulders, elbows, wrists, fingers in fact any part of the human anatomy that helped the players feel more secure regarding preventing and protecting injuries.

On Sundays I was required to be present for the entire day as the four teams, under 18's, C. grade, B. grade and A. grade prepared and played their games. My duties meant that I barely had time to scratch myself.

I was responsible for the health and well-being of close to 70 players, certainly no rest for the wicked here.

I was being paid less than one dollar per hour, crazy stuff indeed!

The reality of the situation meant that I got to know many people very well in an extremely short amount of time.

Through commitment, enthusiasm, some skill and plenty of improvisation I was able to earn the respect of the community in a short amount of time.

The players started to come to my clinic to seek treatment, their families were intrigued and as the results of treatment became known the number of patients attending my practice grew.

As an added bonus, one of the rugby players was good family friend of the patriarch of the local medical fraternity.

The doctor was a keen golfer, as curiously, many are and as a consequence he suffered from various physical imbalances.

He also happened to be a 65-year-old White Russian emigrant who could remember his mother applying cups when he fell ill as a young boy in Russia.

Consequently he had a positive attitude towards traditional medicine and when that openness in attitude was combined with some positive treatment outcomes I won a significant ally for traditional acupuncture and my practice.

In the four years I practiced in this small country town the good doctor, the rugby players, their families and hundreds of others were introduced to the strength and flexibility of traditional acupuncture for the first time.

This was a strong rural, Midwestern if you like, country town full of people who depended upon the land for their livelihood.

What these people couldn't do, was take a day off a consequence of being self-employed and dependant upon the weather and markets.

Many of these small crop farmers carried the scars of a lifetime or as in some cases a half or quarter of a lifetime hard physical work on the land.

Not for them, Chinese philosophy, they wanted results now, please.

Of course, I did my best to oblige.

All I can say on reflection is, "*I wish I knew then what I know now*", regarding the quality of my treatments.

As a newbie practitioner this small country town was an ideal location to start my career.

I learnt much about becoming a member of a community and more about business, finances, accounts, banks and associations.

I met many strong and genuine people who bore their hardship and pain with grace, I made some lifelong friends, learnt much about my strengths but more about my weaknesses and acupuncture gave me a glimpse of its power to heal.

I am grateful to say that opening a country practice had been an outstanding success, professionally.

Based on my experience and those of a number of my colleagues, I would encourage any burgeoning practitioner to establish a practice in a rural community.

The key to my success was my willingness and enthusiasm to participate and serve the community, even if I only earned one dollar per hour doing so.

Even in this day and age, in the right context, a little voluntary service can go a long way towards establishing yourself in your community and generate an enormous amount of goodwill.

Sadly the week before we were due to open up the doors of our fully renovated, air-conditioned clinic at the end of a small arcade in the main street of a small country town we discovered that my late wife and mother of my twin daughters had developed a malignant melanoma in her eye.

So, after four years of tests, diagnosis, prognosis and minimal surgical procedures we decided it was time for her to go back to her roots and family at the other end of the country to spend the last days, months, perhaps years of her life with those that knew her best.

1989 --1994.

Working from home, plenty of heat in the kitchen.

In the preceding five years I had developed a very keen interest in working with athletes.

I could see the difference in response to treatment between those chronically ill or suffering from long-term pain and those fortunate enough to participate in sport.

Our choice for the location of the new clinic was close to 3000 miles away from my country practice in Hobart, Tasmania.

With a beautiful wife who didn't know how long she had to live and lovely seven-year-old twin daughters, it was imperative that we spend every precious minute possible together.

We took out a three-year lease on solid two storey, double brick, early 1900s residence.

Upstairs at street level was our home with three bedrooms and all the bits and pieces required.

The downstairs section was at the rear of the following and could be reached directly by path down beside the house.

It had a small waiting room, bathroom and two treatment rooms.

This expansive dwelling was located on one of the main roads of the State capital about 2 miles from the city centre.

It was a long way from a country practice.

The premises were in very good order and we had to spend only nominal amount to bring them up to speed.

The local authorities did not have any problems with our establishing a practice at this location, it was on a main road and we got two for the price of one.

We were very happy with the arrangement, since one rental payment equaled one home plus one business and we were able to spend plenty of time together as a family.

A very good idea if you can engineer it.

Kayelene's brother-in-law was a talented middle to long-distance runner and trained with a squad of elite athletes.

I attended the athletes training sessions, introduced myself to the coach, a very open-minded gentleman who concurred with me that would be a great idea for his squad to attend an informal chat about sport, acupuncture and how it might benefit them.

I went to any store even vaguely related to athletics and introduced myself.

I went to the offices of the State government and introduced myself to the Sport's Minister's number one man.

I also introduced myself to the owners and staff of many local businesses.

In many cases people were slightly shocked to be confronted by a passionate six-foot plus traditional acupuncture practitioner.

A majority of the people that I talked to had never met an acupuncturist before and had very little idea of traditional acupuncture's clinical efficacy.

I walked and I talked solidly for almost two weeks and by the end of which most members of the local athletic and business community were aware that a sports acupuncture clinic had opened locally.

In this city of 300,000 people I found the most effective form of promotion to be face-to-face communication and the resultant word-of-mouth advertising was priceless.

My marketing research reinforced the reality of these findings.

In a city of that size it was possible for me to indulge in my passion for and appreciation of athletic endeavor.

My natural enthusiasm for working with people committed to reaching their full potential was a windfall.

When combined with our enthusiasm to create a home and business, pronto we had plenty of ammunition to create a prosperous acupuncture practice within six months.

The single-mindedness required to do this was also driven by my desire to create a safe environment for my wife, who by now was in failing health and my two beautiful daughters.

In such circumstances working from home was an ideal scenario. The major benefits of such a setup were significant savings in overheads and quality time together as a family.

Six months after establishing this practice and 5 1/2 years after Kayelene's initial diagnosis and prognosis, her health took a radical turn for the worse.

The timing was uncanny, almost as though she had waited until we had created a safe home environment and burgeoning practice before she allowed the cancer to prevail.

12 months after opening the doors of our practice and six years after the original diagnosis, my beautiful wife, mother of my children, died.

I remain incredibly grateful to this courageous and loving woman for the inexhaustible support, encouragement and enthusiasm that she brought to my practice of traditional acupuncture.

A huge part of the reason for my success had disappeared, resulting in what I call the twilight years.

For the next two years I limped along whilst the practice that we had worked so hard to establish maintained status quo.

No longer did I have the time, energy nor the inclination to promote my practice and relied solely upon word-of-mouth advertising as a source of new clientele.

Trapped in emotional torment, my passion, determination and commitment wavered.

My daughters were devastated by the loss of their mother.

They commenced a campaign, as only twins can do, to move back home to the northern end of our country, where the summers are hot, winters mild and the ocean, invitingly warm, a place of secure and happy memories.

In response to their continued requests, in the winter of 1992, almost three years to the day after opening our Hobart clinic, the doors closed for the last time and we moved north, back to the sub – tropics.

For the next two years I struggled on all levels.

Once again I had leased a large dwelling with the view of establishing a similar type of arrangement to the practice down south and work from home.

Wrong, with no drive, my passion consumed by grief and twin 10-year-old daughters still fighting the come to grips with the loss of their mother, the writing was on the wall.

After only three months I closed the doors of the clinic.

I spent most of the next year or so, either looking out for my daughters, working part-time as a cleaner or just staring out to sea.

1994 -1999

Sometime in 1994 a colleague I had met when we were students studying acupuncture, offered me some part-time work lecturing at one of the local acupuncture colleges.

Gradually my desire to be of service and an acute awareness of a perilous financial situation took over from the sadness, grief and guilt that had dominated me for what seemed to be an intermittent amount of time following the passing of my late wife.

I began practicing from the student clinic rooms at the college where I was employed and also started working part-time in a small two treatment room, beachfront clinic with two Massage therapists.

Whilst not setting the world on fire at the college clinic there was no capital outlay nor any overheads since any income was divided between me and the college.

A great arrangement if you can get it.

My paradisiacal beach front clinic proved to be a far more difficult situation, the long and short of it, not so squeezey, squeezey.

There was insufficient space for both of my massage colleagues and I to operate effectively.

From a surfing and aesthetic perspective I was very reluctant to leave this idyllic beachfront location, however, from a clinical perspective neither the premises nor the personal dynamics were conducive to the running of a busy practice.

Sadly it did not meet many of the fundamental criteria required to establish a successful acupuncture practice.

For 12 months or so, these pleasant beachfront rooms contributed admirably towards re-establishing some confidence in me, personally and my capacity to practice traditional acupuncture.

As a result of this decision my daughters and I relocated to a smaller apartment with one bedroom set aside for treatments.

I was working from home, again, this time without the approval of local authorities.

The apartment was definitely not large enough to establish a professional practice but in combination with the student clinic rooms at the college, it provided me with invaluable practice and some extra income to pay the bills.

18months of this arrangement and it became obvious that it would be in my best interests to establish a more professional practice in commercial premises.

Located on the beachside Hwy that runs the length of the coastline of the Gold Coast, a two minute drive from the beach were premises that satisfied many important criteria.

My future practice was on a major arterial road, had heaps of space and potential to expand.

The rent was very reasonable, adjacent to the bus stop, opposite the local high school and very close to the geographic centre of the beachside strip, did I mention next door to a whole foods supermarket.

Although not in the CBD, the building was only 300 yards from an older style, neighborhood shopping centre.

There was sufficient floor area for three separate treatment rooms, a waiting room, a small office and a mezzanine floor, the only section requiring any extensive renovations.

I signed a five year lease with a five year option.

My expenses were basically limited to signage, phone connection and business cards.

One of my students had been carpet layer and for the princely sum of \$150 we were able to fully carpet the waiting room area.

I took the upper two treatment rooms and sublet the downstairs treatment room to another practitioner from an allied modality.

I was able to significantly lighten the financial burden by subletting excess space and fulfill most of my clinic survival criteria, especially by keeping my overheads to an absolute minimum, since I was now paying double rent.

1999 as 2004

Through one of my lecturing positions, I was approached early in 1999 regarding my interest in sub-letting rooms part time in a new Sports Medicine Centre in Brisbane about an hours drive away.

After some consideration I decided that was in my best interests to take these rooms on a part-time basis, two days a week.

I could indulge in my interest in performance enhancing acupuncture and work with a team of sports medicine specialists in a multi modality centre.

I sublet treatment rooms in my home clinic for the two days a week that I was away plus Saturdays.

The tenant was one of my outstanding graduate students and this arrangement is harmonious to this day.

Subletting of rooms in the sports medicine centre required an additional 4 hours driving each week.

It was and still is worth it.

The professional relationships that I have been able to establish as a result of this arrangement have made the extra effort well worthwhile.

The sports medicine centre relocated in early 2002 and is now situated at one of the major sporting venues in Brisbane.

At the intersection of two major arterial roads a five-minute commute by bus to the city centre, it is as close to an ideal geographical location as you could want.

At the time of writing I continue to travel to Brisbane twice-weekly and practice three days per week from my Gold Coast Clinic, enjoying the best of both worlds.

After 5 years of industrious activity, motivated by the decision to take up the 5 year option on my lease, I decided to spend \$30,000 on a full refit and renovation of the premises.

In so doing I was able to renovate the mezzanine area, transforming it into one long treatment room housing 4 parallel treatment tables, each separated by lush curtains.

My daughters were 18 years of age and preparing to relocate closer to their respective universities.

In late 2000 I moved into the small one room flat that had been created during the aforementioned renovations.

Summary

There are many variables that will influence your decision regarding the location of your practice.

I would urge you regardless of where you establish your practice to keep your overheads to an absolute minimum.

Locate your practice as close as possible or practical to a main road and public transport.

Find out how well the local community is serviced with acupuncture and allied modalities.

Consider locating in a medium to large regional city that is blatantly under serviced.

By doing so I believe you will be giving yourself the best opportunity to create a thriving practice in the shortest time possible.

An integrated multi modality medical centre, sub letting rooms for three days per week, keeping overheads to a minimum, capital outlay negligible and automatically creating a referral network is definitely the preferred option when looking to establish a successful acupuncture practice.

CHAPTER 5.
THE ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY OF YOUR PRACTICE.....
HEALTHY OR NOT?

The setup of your clinic ultimately comes down to personal preferences.

I have used many variations of a clinical set up, from single bed rooms with a closed door policy to a multi bed space where a number of beds are separated by curtains.

My experience has verified that large treatment rooms with multiple beds are extremely efficient and fully functional and a layout that I can highly recommend to you.

For the first 15 years of my career I practiced using separate single bed treatment rooms with a closed door policy.

I was convinced that multiple bed treatment rooms would not be culturally acceptable to my patients.

Much like my attitude towards lighter needling, I could not accept that it might work and did not see any reason to try.

I first saw multiple bed treatment rooms in action during my initial visit to Japan the mid-nineties.

At the time I rationalized that such a system would be culturally and socially unacceptable in the West.

How wrong I was!

I returned to Japan on a number of occasions and I slowly adapted to the possibility that multiple bed treatment rooms just might be culturally acceptable in the west.

In 2000 I took the opportunity to fully remodel my clinic.

At the risk of upsetting my patient's perception of privacy, I took the plunge into multi bed treatment rooms trusting that my cultural inhibitions were just that and any downside would be outweighed by the very real benefits for myself and my patients.

The past five years have proven this assumption to be correct.

Multi-bed treatment rooms.

Safety

As a traditionalist I use a lot of moxa in my clinic, from this perspective alone the multi-bed, single room setup enables me to constantly monitor the comfort and safety of my patients and take immediate action when necessary.

A maximum of six steps and I am at the patients side!

Privacy issues

My many inhibitions about this setup were immediately eased by the acceptance and enjoyment demonstrated by a vast majority of my patient's towards the social interaction generated during their treatment.

As a practitioner this can be little risky, sometimes downright awkward when things do not go our way in treatment and outcomes are problematic.

Patients know how each others treatments are progressing.

As practitioner there is no hiding when it comes to treatment outcomes and poor needle technique, our cards are definitely laid out on the table for all to see.

Patients should feel the honesty, reality and sincerity with which we approach problematic treatment outcomes.

I see both problematic and desirable treatment outcomes as a wonderful opportunity to educate those patients who are keen to understand and take more responsibility for their own health and well-being.

If done with respect, care and sensitivity, all present including fellow patients can benefit significantly from clear and concise communication.

My experience has shown that this social interaction and non reclusive approach to illness and pain can greatly assist patients to recognize, hence overcome much of the isolation and desolation that can be so tangible when illness and pain prevail.

They all understand that as their practitioner I give each and every treatment 100%, leaving no stone unturned in an effort to bring about improved health and/or a significant reduction in their pain and discomfort.

I am accountable to the patients collectively as well as individually.

It is amazing to watch patient's reactions when their lights get turned on as a result of an understandable and plausible explanation of their or one of their fellow patients plight from the perspective of traditional oriental medicine.

Efficiency

The efficiency of the multi bed treatment room is unquestionable.

With the aid of my receptionist/clinical assistant, it is possible to function relatively comfortably, even when all 4 beds occupied simultaneously.

This clinical set up also lends itself amicably to the process of mentoring, assisting the educational process of on-the-job training no end.

Single bed treatment rooms

Whilst there might be a few advantages to this setup, when our inhibitions regarding patient's privacy are put aside, the social, economical, safety, educational and functional advantages of multi-bed treatment rooms become quite apparent.

If you still have reservations about this style of clinical set up, you might consider having a single bed treatment room in addition to a multi-bed treatment room.

Preparation area

In my practice this area is separated from the treatment cubicles by curtains only.

I firmly believe in encouraging a social ethic in my practice and encourage conscious interaction between my staff, students and patients.

Congruency of intention is a very powerful energetic tool.

You only have to go to your nearest place of worship, sporting stadium, parade or festival to confirm this fact.

With congruency of intention in place the atmosphere in our practices will be light and harmonious, resulting in a majority of your patients leaving with a smile on their dial, knowing that they have been heard and cared for by all present.

CHAPTER 6.

HAPPY CUSTOMERS..... HAPPY DAYS.

Good service and excellent treatment outcomes are fundamental to a prosperous acupuncture practice.

It is in these key areas that we as Traditional acupuncturists can find our niche market.

As acupuncturists we can offer punctual, friendly and genuine service whilst providing our patients a unique opportunity to relax and unwind during treatment.

Many of my patients fall asleep, some even drool during treatment.

One Olympic athlete who shall remain anonymous for obvious reasons would become rather disconcerted if he had not drooled sufficiently.

He trained twice-daily, everyday and it was vital that he sink into a deep state of relaxation during treatment.

Of equal importance he needed to leave the clinic feeling energized rather than spaced out.

Performed with sensitivity, traditional acupuncture and moxabustion are capable of inducing the deepest states of relaxation.

Conversely, we have the ability using lighter needling and abbreviated treatment time to rapidly energize exhausted individuals.

Office workers, computer technicians, CEOs, elite athletes, factory workers, people from all walks of life, not to mention babies, expectant mums, most mums in fact, can benefit enormously from receiving regular acupuncture and moxabustion treatment.

Part of our work as practitioners of such a misunderstood healing modality is to communicate the benefits of treatment for health maintenance with clarity.

To do this effectively we must really understand the needs and wants of our patients and interpret that understanding for them and educate the patient about the many unique perspectives of traditional oriental medicine.

You may find the 'Yellow Emperor's Classic' or 'Su Wen' one of the foremost classical texts, extremely helpful in this regard.

Making your patient or prospective patient comfortable from the moment they phone your practice to make an appointment is a key element to both successful treatment and successful business.

Achieving this outcome requires quality staff.

It starts with a clear and friendly phone manner.

Wherever possible, my staff to answer all enquiries regarding treatments and appointments.

Our protocol for making appointments over the phone results in the new patient repeating their appointment times to my receptionist and knowing our location, exactly!

The last thing that we want to have happen is for a new patient to have difficulties locating our practice and becoming stressed in the process.

There have been many instances where it has been greatly advantageous to reassure those prospective patients who might be needle shy that we can utilize very gentle, lighter style needling techniques.

In the case of children in most cases I commence treatment using no needles at all.

Having lighter needle techniques as an option enables me to attract many patients who otherwise might never have made it through the clinic door and give the patient an opportunity to overcome any fears they might have about needles.

Fortunately, my clinical experience tells me that we can achieve excellent treatment outcomes using only rice grain moxabustion and/or lighter needling techniques.

This gives my practice a significant advantage when discussing treatment with potential patients.

Once the patient has had one or two treatments they then have the opportunity to experience deeper needling techniques, if required.

Providing easy and accessible parking, an ambient atmosphere in your waiting room and a friendly welcome upon arrival can go a long way towards establishing trust and rapport with your patients.

If you have a receptionist/assistant working with you, it is preferable that they have experienced your treatment on a number of occasions.

Doing this will enable them to discuss the feeling of treatment with some degree of authority, a fact that doesn't escape the patient's attention.

Suitable music can go a long way towards ensuring your patients comfort and creating a relaxing atmosphere for everyone.

The most important factor is to do those things over which we have control to the best of our ability and let the rest take care of itself.

By providing a relaxing environment and giving our patients the opportunity to fully relax we offer some respite in the midst of the go, go, go of the 21st century.

It is crucial for the staff and practitioner/s to be in harmony regarding the achievement of this goal.

CHAPTER 7.

TREATMENT OUTCOMES.... CREAM ON THE CAKE OR JAM ON THE FLOOR?

Some of the hardest and most rewarding lessons that I learnt have come as a result of failing to achieve a satisfactory treatment outcome for my patient.

Difficult patients present a significant challenge to our professional psyche. Failing to promote better health in a patient can challenge us on many levels.

When treatments are not going well I have asked myself on countless occasions.

Is it something I am doing wrong?

What more can I do to promote better treatment outcome?

Can I really help this person?

Maybe acupuncture is not effective in these conditions?

Why is a treatment that is so effective for most patients suffering from a similar condition not working for this patient?

What part of the treatment is functional, what part dysfunctional?

These and many other questions reverberate through my mind when dealing with less than satisfactory treatment outcomes.

Is the patient responding at all?

Perhaps they have come to see me to resolve acute neck pain and headaches.

When answering their initial questionnaire they also note that they have significant sleep problems or perhaps suffer from chronic lower back pain.

At their follow up treatment the patient reports that they are still suffering from neck pain and headaches.

Not a good result and the patient will obviously be concerned about the lack of response to treatment.

However, whilst questioning the patient about their underlying symptoms, we discover that they have experienced improvement in their sleep pattern or even some resolution of their chronic lower back pain.

I could easily be totally consumed by my failure to make an impression on their primary symptoms and completely overlook the not so obvious improvements in their overall well-being and mistakenly head off in a different direction with my diagnosis and treatment protocol.

Of course there are situations where we as practitioners do not make any significant inroads with treatment at all.

This being the case we must decide whether the treatment protocol that we are using is valid or invalid, triple check our diagnosis and change or maintain our treatment protocol according to our findings in an effort to bring about the desired outcome or refer the patient to another modality or practitioner.

Our attitude to these situations can make all the difference.

We should leave no stone unturned in our efforts to bring about a satisfactory resolution to the patient's condition.

It is a fine line between making that vital breakthrough in treatment and wasting our patient's time and money.

I encourage you to use these difficult situations as an incentive to study harder, attend study groups and find an experience mentor.

Whilst perfection in treatment is the realm for the privileged few, traditional acupuncture and moxabustion are in my experience very powerful healing tools capable of bringing about very significant changes in the health of a majority of our patients.

Earlier in my career I really did not have handle on the incredible flexibility of our modality.

Nor was I able to functionally relate musculoskeletal disorders to a fundamental internal imbalance.

As the years have passed with the help of an experienced mentor, learned colleagues and astute students I have been able to incorporate the internal/external relationship far more comprehensively and effectively in my treatments.

Patient's suffering from a wide range of health problems including autoimmune disorders, flu's and colds and promotion of athletic performance have become much easier and more straightforward for me to work with.

Keep in mind that I treat patients suffering from all of the above conditions solely through the use of traditional acupuncture and moxibustion, no herbs or allied modalities whatsoever.

This is not to say that I discount the efficacy of herbal medicine or other modalities at all but I made a decision early in my career to explore the amazing historical legacy that we have at our disposal as practitioners of traditional acupuncture and moxabustion.

My experience observing at Masakazu Ikeda's clinic in Japan exploded my comprehension of what traditional acupuncture and moxabustion is clinically capable of, alerting me that my expectations and understanding of the clinical efficacy of this very powerful medicine was extremely limited indeed.

By choosing to focus specifically on these healing modalities I have been privileged to witness some amazing clinical outcomes and have come to understand that in many cases lack of satisfactory treatment outcomes have been a result of my limited understanding and lack of clinical expertise, rather than any limitations inherent in traditional acupuncture and moxabustion.

So I urge you not to discount traditional acupuncture and moxabustion too early but to exhaust all resources available to you in an all out effort to truly comprehend the difference between the clinical efficacy of our modality and the limitations we place upon ourselves due to a lack of guidance, expertise and experience.

CHAPTER 8.

TO MENTOR OR NOT TO MENTOR.....THAT IS THE QUESTION.

I take no prisoners on this score.

I believe that there is absolutely no question regarding the value of having an experienced mentor on your team.

I liken practicing Acupuncture without a mentor to that age-old game of 'pin the tail on the donkey', complete with blindfold.

We can get reasonable treatment results without the guidance of a mentor, we can be successful and prosperous without a mentor but my reality and my experience attests to the awesome value of having an experienced practitioner in place as a sounding board to gain a realistic perspective on where we might be going right or wrong with our treatments at any given time.

The following analogy might clarify my position in this regard.

As a young man, I was fortunate to be working in a ski resort.

Being of an athletic nature I enjoyed skiing very much and had some degree aptitude as a recreational participant.

I could turn, stop and travel at relatively high speeds without too much effort and only occasionally face plant in the snow.

During the second season of my employment I met an American ski instructor who was far more outgoing and benevolent than his European forebears.

Being of congenial nature he befriended the staff of the resort and free of charge, took it upon himself to elevate our level of expertise in skiing.

After a few sessions of follow the leader down the mountain and experiencing the enthusiasm and camaraderie of the staff he proposed the following.

If as a group we assisted in building a ski jump made of blocks of ice and snow he would teach us the intricacies of aerial skiing.

To a person we agreed.

I would never have achieved or even thought of undertaking such a potentially dangerous act without his guidance.

The most significant advantage for him lay in having a ready-made facility to practice his advanced aerial skills without suffering a hernia in the process.

He also thrived on our enthusiasm to learn and develop.

Another advantage for our mentor was the satisfaction that he derived from passing on his skill, expertise and experience whilst helping in the development of aerial skiing in Australia.

There was no doubt that he enjoyed watching us evolve as skiers and his skill levels improved as a result of teaching.

The point I am attempting to make here is that the mentor/mentored relationship should be a balanced one.

In exchange for his guidance Randy had a ready made crew willing to build a jump for him, all parties benefited.

If you are looking for a mentor make sure that you offer them something in exchange for their knowledge, experience and guidance.

You can assist in clinic, clean, offer to conduct promotional activities on their behalf.

You may have IT or computer expertise, regardless make it clear from the beginning that you are not simply aboard for the ride but are willing and able to pitch in to make life somewhat easier for them in some form or fashion.

On Mentoring

My experience from the perspective of a mentor of traditional acupuncture and moxabustion over the past decade has in many ways mirrored that of my skiing mentor.

I have mentored many students and junior practitioners, assisting them to successfully join our profession and go on to help many people to better health.

Unquestionably this has provided me with some of the most rewarding and satisfying moments of my career.

Oddly enough I believe that I have learnt as much if not more than my students through mentoring.

In clinic, on a daily basis, to have astute questions asked of me regarding the reasoning behind and the objectives of my treatment can be extremely challenging.

The reward being that theory and practice become synonymous and the basics are continually reinforced for both the mentor and mentored.

There is now hiding our treatment outcomes and on all levels as a mentor I am accountable not only to my patients but to my students also.

Situations such as this are guaranteed to keep anyone on their toes!!

On Being Mentored

On the other side of the coin I have had the privilege of benefiting from the wisdom of many mentors.

All have contributed in invaluable ways to my ongoing development as an individual and practitioner.

Currently, I have ongoing relationships with a number of erstwhile individuals from many diverse areas of life, business and traditional acupuncture.

I cannot understate how grateful I am to each and every one of them, as I have learned and continue to learn not merely from their words but from their example.

It is here that the value of the mentoring relationship stands up to be counted.

The metamorphosis that takes place over an extended period time carries the full weight of learning and represents the true essence of understanding and implementation.

My experience suggests that the attitudinal resonance of individuals who are masters in their fields carries as much weight when it comes to learning as any intellectual exchange that might take place.

Witnessing a master practitioner such as Masakazu Ikeda from Japan working in clinic with an incredibly diverse range of patients suffering from all manner of ailments taught me much about what can be learnt in the spaces between the words, especially in light of my linguistic limitations.

In my short time as an overseas guest in his clinic, more doors opened within me regarding acupuncture, life, attitudes, etiquette, patients and patience than at any other time in my life.

His incredible understanding of the Traditional Chinese Medical classics such as the Su Wen and Ling Shu, Shan Han Lun etc., Ikeda sensei wove an implicitly powerful web of understanding and clinical relevance in all of his treatments.

Patients benefited enormously through the strength Ikeda sensei generated with his expertise, clarity, compassion, focus and Mack truck conviction.

He has an incredibly deep well of experience to draw upon.

This gentleman's fingertips turn bright red within minutes of commencing treatment.

You can imagine what they were like at the end of a busy day in clinic.

All of the aforementioned factors conjured together with a powerful presence of mind, clarity of intent and strength of heart generated enormous qi/ki.

It was tangible.

I did my utmost to contribute in the day-to-day running of the clinic, finding tasks such as cleaning the higher more difficult to reach areas of the clinic, using my 8 feet plus reach to the best advantage possible.

Such relationships are best based on mutual respect not idolatry and it is up to us as students to earn our mentor's respect with earnest endeavor.

With a good attitude, integrity and gratitude you too can enjoy taking your aeriels in Acupuncture to another level.

CHAPTER 9.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY..... A KEY TO ONGOING VITALITY.

For each of us recreational activity can take on completely different meaning.

The bottom line is that we can make available the time, even ritualize a recreational activity that brings us enjoyment and a feeling of well-being.

Whilst writing this book I have been confronted with many challenges, not the least being the number of recreational hours that I have spent indoors.

My hometown is the city of the Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia, affectionately known as 'The Goldie'.

This nickname is a clear reflection of an idyllic climate combined with magnificent beaches laden with golden sand, abundant surf, huge sand islands, prolific hinterland rainforests and the lifestyle to match.

The writing of this book has required that I temporarily sacrifice a very large slice of my recreational life.

Temporarily!

I have seriously considered buying a set of time locked handcuffs such has been my difficulty in spending gratuitous amounts of time throughout our hot and sultry summer, indoors rather than outdoors.

Experience tells me that when I spend an inordinate amount of time inside, the quality of my treatments can be affected detrimentally as my body and subsequently my clarity of thought often struggle when deprived of sufficient enjoyable and relaxing physical activity.

I endeavor to use not abuse the phenomenal amount of knowledge and information available as a result of the development of information technology and the World Wide Web.

Becoming overwhelmed by physical inactivity and the resultant inertia significantly affects my motivation and clarity.

My temperament and constitution favors more physically active recreational activity than sedentary.

The 21st century information explosion inherently tests our mettle to the very core and the capacity to live a large chunk of our lives through one screen or another is very tempting.

The opportunity to remain sedentary during our valuable recreational time continues to spiral as the wave of information and entertainment available to us without physical participation gathers momentum.

For mine it is vital to use rather than abuse the labyrinth of knowledge freely available to us with a mere touch of the finger.

This is not necessarily the scenario for all and it is certainly a case of 'different strokes for different folks'.

Regardless, for most of us it is desirable that our recreational pursuits primarily bring about some level of quietude not necessarily related to a high degree of excitation, others require a degree of mental or physical activity followed by a cultivated sense of relaxation, which is to my mind the essential ingredient enables us to recharge our batteries.

Whatever, the recreational activity or inactivity that allows us to be fully present in the moment should be high on our list of priorities.

I encourage you to discover what it is that allows you to switch off from helping people and expand your appreciation of other inspirational areas of life.

Social activity with family and friends also provides us with a great opportunity to celebrate unconditional and hopefully rewarding energetic interaction.

The social fabric that we weave through positive and uplifting communication is a great source of energy for all concerned.

I am grateful to Koji Ichihashi sensei for pointing out to me some years ago that positive social interaction was as much a source of nourishment in our lives as food on the table.

I had never quite looked at constructive socializing as a form of mutual energetic sustenance.

Suitably illuminated, it has become increasingly obvious to me that this perspective on communication holds plenty of water, particularly in a time of need.

The simple act of breaking food together assumes far greater importance than simply filling our stomachs.

It provides us with a regular and ritualized opportunity to nourish both our body and soul.

As you get busier in clinic it is essential that you establish a daily routine that allows you some 'time out', even if only 30 minutes after you have eaten lunch.

My daily schedule is pretty well written in ink now, with time out after lunch every day.

I am grateful to surf an average of 4 mornings per week and get plenty of exercise, sometimes taking it to the extreme as I endeavor to get under a large oncoming wave as I paddle out through the break.

There is not a lot more I can say on this topic.

Whether you enjoy Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Yoga, retail therapy, play-station the important thing is to take some time out for yourself EVERY day.

I believe I have avoided many a nasty burn out and assorted illnesses by having some 'my time' frequently.

Oh yes, I did do the hundred mile an hour thing and got away with it for almost 8 years.

Then it dawned on me, gradually, I had developed an insidious digestive disorder, whilst not serious, it took my energy down a peg or two for more than 3 years.

For mine far too high a price to pay.

I guess that is why I am so damn persistent in my advice on this subject. What I gained in the short term was lost ten times over as I struggled rather than cruised through the working day as a consequence of burning the candle voraciously at both ends.

CHAPTER 10.

WISE INVESTMENT..... A VITAL KEY TO PROSPERITY.

In September 2002 events conspired in a unique fashion, allowing me to attend an advanced real estate investment seminar in Phoenix, Arizona.

I had attended the Masakazu Ikeda's traditional acupuncture seminar in San Francisco earlier on in the year and was fortunate enough to meet a number of friendly natives.

I gratefully accepted a kind invitation to travel south with Ray Rubio, licensed acupuncturist and professor at Emperor's college to Los Angeles and then onto San Diego to spend time with Elizabeth Talcott and K.C. Conover, both lecturers at the Pacific College of Oriental medicine.

The extraordinary hospitality shown me was to be the beginning of lasting friendships and considerable intercontinental interaction concerning the growth and prosperity of traditional acupuncture in the 21st century.

At the completion of my visit I was invited to travel back to the States in September later that year to present a three-day workshop in San Diego.

Over the next couple of months we confirmed all the necessary details and decided upon a date.

Concurrently another rather extraordinary scenario was unfolding before me. One of my students here in Australia, Paul Hoogendyk had mentioned to me that he had just bought a new house.

Nothing particularly extraordinary here other than the fact that he was still a student.

What is exceptional is that six weeks later he mentioned that he had bought yet another property.

I was curious, who wouldn't be.

Here was an undergraduate, buying properties much like most people shop for soap powder at the supermarket.

How could this be the case?

After intensive interrogation he revealed that he had been studying real estate investment for the past 12 months under the guidance of a gentleman by the name of John Burley, American investor, entrepreneur and educator.

Did I say my curiosity was aroused?

Absolutely!

After more than 15 years in the profession of acupuncture I had precious little equity to show for my earnest endeavor and found myself on the treadmill of the financial doldrums.

I always seem to be able to make ends meet but never had sufficient funds to accrue any sort of long-term financial gain.

The situation had become status quo, I was not desperate, not in serious debt, yet I had a few options in either professionally or personally due to insufficient cash.

I owned a small four-cylinder car, the fixtures and fittings in my clinic and some furniture.

I had precious little put aside for the proverbial rainy day and at 50 years of age my thoughts were becoming more and more focused on being able to support myself adequately in the latter years of my life.

Governments worldwide have already recognized and sounded the alarm regarding their inability to provide any significant support to the elderly in the years to come.

The math is simple, the population in the first world countries is rapidly becoming aged and the capacity of younger generations to support baby boomers through exorbitant taxation is very sketchy and in no way to be relied upon.

So it was that I researched and made relevant enquiries about how I might also begin to accrue some degree of financial security for the future.

As events transpired, John Burley was conducting an advanced real estate investment workshop in Phoenix, Arizona immediately after I had finished presenting the traditional acupuncture workshop in San Diego.

It also transpired that the fee for the five-day real estate investment workshop was exactly the same amount that I was being paid to present the traditional acupuncture workshop.

Without doubt I carried many preconceived ideas about wealth and greed.

However, necessity is a great motivator and I was acutely aware of how financially vulnerable I was and the truth of the matter was that I was absolutely fed up with my very ordinary financial situation.

The decision to attend the real estate investment workshop has proven to be a major turning point in my life.

The real estate investment workshop just happened to coincide with the greatest property boom Australia has ever seen.

Armed with a barrel full of beginner's bravado, I joined the seething throng and was fortunate to be in a position to buy three and sell two properties before the air disappeared from the real estate bubble.

The upshot of these events has meant that I now have a significant amount of equity in the property I that I held onto.

I went from \$0 to \$100,000 in 12 months, many might have done better but the long and short of it is that it would have taken 10 years saving \$10,000 per year to achieve the same outcome solely through my labors in clinic.

I took an educated gamble and it paid off handsomely.

I now personally control my retirement fund, also.

I believe a 3% return on investment (standard rates of return of Australian retirement funds) is a sure way of losing money.

3% is an insufficient return on your investment to really move forward, with some research it should be possible to achieve a 10%- 14% return on your money without becoming exposed to unacceptably high levels of risk.

I do not profess to be anything but a rookie investor.

But, it has certainly paid off for me with the level of dependence on clinical income significantly reduced and much of the pressure that I had experienced regarding patient numbers, income, food on the table and a roof over my head

has dissipated encouraging me to become a lot more relaxed and comfortable in clinic.

Today my heart does not plummet when a patient cancels.

I now see cancellations as an opportunity to study acupuncture, real estate, stock markets or heaven forbid, simply chill out and relax.

As a self employed professional the benefits of educating yourself regards judicious investment are significant and I cannot urge you enough to begin that education, NOW!

CHAPTER 11.

RECHARGING THE BATTERIES..... PINA COLADAS DOWN BY THE POOL.

In addition to regular recreational activity my experience insists that it is wise to get away at least once a year.

For me that break has taken a number of different forms.

From camping orientated expeditions to some of the more isolated beaches of the East Coast of Australia with my family to traveling to Fiji with an old friend on the proverbial, boys only surfing trip.

In my early years in practice, especially with the young family to support and a new business to grow our visits to the pristine beaches of the East Coast of Australia were somewhat limited.

After two years in practice, armed with the knowledge that upon our return my beautiful wife, Kayelene would find out whether or not she would lose a cancerous eye, we set out on a magnificent road trip, traveling from the subtropical beaches of Southern Queensland, thousands of kilometers, all the way down the East Coast of Australia, ultimately crossing the infamous Bass Strait by overnight vehicular ferry and arriving in our island state, Tasmania.

Kayelene's family lived in Hobart, the southernmost state capital of the country. We had a wonderful time, spending the rare, warm Hobartian Christmas at the beach, climbing the mountains, sailing, swimming and touring.

The warmth and security of being surrounded by Kayelene's family stood us all in good stead.

Traveling with a box trailer filled with all the necessary gear we pitched camp on the green foreshores and lush reserves of the many naturally beautiful coastal havens in our time away.

Without doubt we were incredibly enriched as a family and individually by our holiday and the many hours spent playing on the beach, in the waves and the seemingly endless games of eye spy with my little eye, gave us all more strength to deal with the trying years to come.

These are times great rejuvenation, regardless of the situation.

Should you have young family, I urge you to indulge in such rewarding pursuits at least bi-annually.

In 1996 when my daughters were 15 years of age I traveled overseas to Japan and United States on the first of a number of quests for further knowledge, understanding and skill in my chosen profession.

Over the next several years I managed to spend time and study with some amazing individuals.

The goodwill and positive energy resulting from the creation of a multinational network of friends and colleagues continues to encourage me to reach my full potential professionally and personally.

Recharge my batteries, you bet it does!

Recently, I was a little more self-indulgent and as a result of holiday rewards program of the finance company that holds the mortgage my property, I was able to treat myself and a friend of almost 40 years to a surfing trip in beautiful Fiji Islands.

I traveled to Fiji primarily to indulge in uncrowded, quality waves that break upon surrounding coral reefs with my old friend and fellow surfer, David.

I packed plenty of needles and moxa just in case I might be able to do a little good in addition to indulging in some awesome waves and laying around on a hammock under a coconut palm gazing out over the pristine sandy beaches and the crystal clear tropical waters.

Amazing what an ice breaker being an acupuncturist can be when traveling. Through my willingness to help, I met and befriended a multitude of locals, fellow surfers from all over the world and the owner of an awesome surf camp on one of the smaller islands that can be found not so far off the Viti Levu.

This island was a short boat ride from a world class surfing location, an added bonus to the glorious sunsets, fresh fish and incredible array of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Adding cream to the cake we met two surfing couples from Hawaii who had chartered a 60ft. schooner to sail around the islands.

I had the pleasure of helping one of them, Eric to resolve pain and discomfort in his knee.

The result of having a meniscus removed some years ago and doing heaps of surfing in some quite powerful waves.

His partner also had the misfortune to contract Fiji Belly, leaving her disconsolate, energetically debilitated with a nasty dose of the 'Excuse me, I have to run.'

Pleased to report success on all fronts with treatment, certainly helped us break the ice and culminated in an invitation to join our new found Hawaiian friends aboard their modus operandi for some cruising, fishing and a wee bit of surfing.

How pleasant it was to watch the sunset, rum in one hand, and beer in the other, enjoying convivial conversation and plenty of laughs about the day's adventures with the skipper, crew and motley assortment of surfers.

I relate this tale to you to emphasize the possibility that it is not necessary to completely drop our clinical bundle when on holidays.

Although there are definitely occasions when dropping the proverbial bundle is imperative for sanities sake, the above scenario was tailor made for recreational acupuncture.

The trade winds would often come up by late morning turning the surf into a chaotic symphony of white horses resulting in a washing machine cauldron of foam, giving us plenty of opportunity to leisurely communicate with all and sundry.

The satisfaction of administering traditional acupuncture and moxabustion treatment was real for both practitioner and patient, automatically opening many doors.

The mere mention of acupuncture stimulated animated discussion and controversy, sometimes authoritatively, sometimes naively, sometimes ignorantly, always eager, vibrant discussion about the various merits and limitations of this extraordinarily durable and still, 5,000 years later, powerful form of traditional medicine.

In many cases I have managed to combine overseas trips where my primary focus has been delivering or attending educational workshops with various delightful detours.

Skiing in New Zealand, hiking and sight seeing in Arizona, scuba diving on the Great Barrier Reef, sightseeing in Japan and golfing in various parts of Australia

have all played their part in making my many trips teaching acupuncture and learning all manner of skills, rewarding experiences.

The most nourishing aspect of these journeys is undoubtedly connecting, sometimes quite profoundly with so many amazingly hospitable human beings.

To experience the open heartedness so many people from such culturally diverse backgrounds is truly inspiring!

No wonder, that upon my return, my batteries are charged and the daily routine, including commuting loses much of its stigma and vitality is never too far away.

CHAPTER 12.

THE MASTER PLAN..... ON NOT BECOMING LOST IN SPACE.

We read about it all the time, yet how many of us take the time and make the effort to put together a solid plan of action.

In the mid nineties I found myself in a very awkward situation, the mother of my children had passed away some years earlier and unfortunately we did not carry any life-insurance.

At the behest of my children I had relocated my family with the intention of establishing a new life and a new practice.

There was however, a serious glitch in my psyche and I was battling to come the terms, not only with the death of my late wife but with the reality of treating patients whilst struggling to give them my full attention and focus.

It was inevitable that I withdraw from the clinical setting and deal with my personal dilemmas and give away any pretense of being an effective practitioner whilst I was so preoccupied with my own pain and angst.

The result, after six months of contemplating my own navel, was a big slide down the proverbial snake and I was stony, cold broke.

With the assistance of many good people I gradually rehabilitated myself to the point where once again I felt capable of giving my full and undivided attention to my patients.

Then in 1996 when I first established my current clinic I was prompted to create a business plan in order to borrow sufficient moneys to get the project underway.

Dutifully, I started to draft my plan.

Fortunately, I did have a pretty clear vision of the type of practice that I wished to create.

At this stage my career I had been teaching at an undergraduate level for two years and had already successfully established a number of practices.

I sat down and thought long and hard about what I wished to create.

I knew that in some way, shape or form I wanted to assist new graduates to understand the power and flexibility of acupuncture in the truest sense, through clinical outcomes and ultimately the welfare of the patient.

I wanted a facility that allowed students to observe treatment and to participate in some way in the everyday running of the clinic.

Mentally I created a pretty clear picture of my clinic, unashamedly modeled on the traditional style clinics that I had visited in Japan.

However, unlike what I am currently suggesting that you do, I placed the plan in a folder and filed it away.

Some five years later whilst looking for something entirely unrelated I came across this plan.

I took some time out to read it and to my astonishment each and every feature of the plan had come to pass.

Many undergraduates, recently graduated practitioners and a number of experienced practitioners had spent time with me in clinic and a majority had gone to establish successful practices.

This really drove home to me the importance of taking the time out to really clarify what it is that I wished to create.

Although I hadn't read the plan for some years, I strongly suggest regular revision of your plan to allow for modifications and essential tweaking as events unfold.

I would like to use the analogy of sailing in an attempt to clearly explain the reasoning behind these words.

I buy myself a magnificent yacht, place strategic advertisements to recruit a top line crew, purchase all the provisions required and install all the latest gadgetry available to assist me in plotting a course.

So what's the big deal, we all gather onboard, departure is imminent, goodbyes are said, up go the sails and we are on our way.

There is one minor or is it a major problem, we have no clear idea of our destination.

How difficult does this make it to plot a course of any substance?

A business plan should start at our destination and then step-by-step work backwards to our current position.

In sailing, state of the art charts and satellite navigation assist past to plot an accurate course with the minimum of effort.

Realistically however, storms come and go, as does the wind, the currents and tides twist and turn, any number of unforeseen difficulties may beset us.

If we have the skill and expertise to use our charts and a clear idea of our destination, whenever a set of unforeseen circumstances prevail we have the best possible chance of re-plotting our course and reaching our destination in the foreseeable future.

There is absolutely no difference in business, rarely does anything go exactly to plan, however without a plan the propensity to get bogged down or stuck in the doldrums going around in a aimless circles is right in our face.

We consume valuable resources, putting in maximum effort for minimum results. Having a solid plan in an area of life provides invaluable support and direction, particularly when we our dire straits.

Suggested Link:

<http://www.cbsc.org/ibp>

CHAPTER 13.

THE EVER EXPANDING HORIZON..... THE WORLD IS NOT FLAT.

Being very much in its infancy in the West a miniscule portion of the available medical modalities, traditional acupuncture has enormous room for exponential growth.

Reputable research programs and data collection play a vital role in the recognition any alternative medicine.

Currently the TCM model provides much common ground for research. About this, there can be no argument.

However, my experience tells me that there are alternative and in some cases far less invasive models of traditional acupuncture and moxabustion that are just as, if not more clinically viable than the TCM model and eminently more consumable by the general public.

My point is that whilst utilizing TCM as the prominent educational and research model let us not limit ourselves when it comes to benefiting patients.

Inflexible, pragmatic attitudes do not lend themselves to our medicine.

We would be well advised to respect the fundamental philosophies upon which this medicine is founded and not simply regurgitate the same ideologies simply for the sake of political expediency.

I believe continued professional education is immensely beneficial for us, professionally and personally.

It can be exercise for our minds, an opportunity to refine our skills and develop our understanding of this ancient and artful medicine or....we can turn our attention to the very core of our medicine, cultivating the ability to open our hearts, an integral part of encouraging free flowing qi/ki I'm referring to quiet contemplation and emotive diligence but definitely not discouraging physical exercise.

Heart, is in my experience the molten rock upon which a practice stands. Without this essential ingredient our success will always be limited by our thoughts, which in my case, can be limited indeed!

By exercising both our minds and bodies, opening our hearts and connecting with our patients as fellow human beings we can begin to open the doors to truly becoming practitioners Of Traditional Acupuncture.

This is the third dimension of traditional acupuncture.

A willingness to be wholeheartedly present for our patients not only benefits them, it creates a positive energetic exchange and ideally leaves both the practitioner and patient feeling uplifted.

My experiences treating the locals in Fiji definitely inspired me.

With patience and dedication I believe that is possible for our profession to make a difference in the fundamental health care regimes of Third World nations.

The benefits of establishing teaching programs in various moxabustion techniques for the impoverished and medically underprivileged are profound.

It is to this area of growth that I am most powerfully drawn at this time of my professional life.

I believe the refined art of traditional moxabustion, particularly rice grain or tonetskyu as it is known in Japan, provides a modality tailor made to benefit many Third World communities.

With hygiene and the expense of using disposable needles put aside, many of the inhibitions and inherent limitations of practicing in 3rd world countries will be automatically lifted.

For those with rotting flesh and riddled with pain, unable to afford allopathic medicines or treatment, subsequently cast aside as economically unviable by their existing medical systems, the opportunity to help themselves could prove to be, irresistible.

It only remains for our profession to get out of its own way and look outside of itself to understand that the world is not flat and many of the limitations that we place upon ourselves are self fulfilling and self perpetuated.