

Conference Reports

WFAS Sydney 2013 8th World Conference on Acupuncture

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Arriving at my first World Federation of Acupuncture-Moxibustion Societies (WFAS) conference, the environmental Qi was palpable. It was a positive gathering of more than 850 acupuncture and Chinese medicine practitioners from all over the world, each present to learn, share discoveries, catch up with colleagues and advance our profession with a united hope for human health, under the conference theme 'From the Classical to the Modern'.

The following are some of the sessions that I found interesting. Unfortunately, there was so much to choose from that expanding on them is not possible for this article.

Day One Highlights

The opening ceremony featured a corroboree from the native owners of the land, which lit up the faces of our international crowd. Dignitaries sat upon the stage and took their turns to speak. Professor Liu Baoyan, the president of WFAS, gave an opening speech about the use and barriers to use of acupuncture internationally, which was very important and informative. It was great to see people step up and help out, as AACMA CEO Judy James was suddenly unwell; Paddy McBride from New Zealand took over the chairperson's role with ease.

Maria Rosa Speronello (Italy) shared pearls of wisdom from her ten years of

private clinical practice on children, followed by Dr Luz Maria Ros Torres (Mexico), who talked about her acupuncture research on ADHD in children as an allergy disorder. Interestingly, Dr Torres traced one case of a child with ADHD back to his allergy to his schoolteacher's perfume!

Debra Betts (New Zealand) shared her findings from her randomised trial on the role of acupuncture for threatened miscarriage. Debra also shared feedback from the trial, which gave us insight into the positive value of active listening.

From Australia, David Hartmann gave a historical perspective on TCM that was both interesting and poetic. Stephen Janz, representing the new Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (CMBA), patiently clarified the amendments to the CMBA policy on infection prevention control for acupuncture practice. Dr Rey Tiquia, after his many years of studying and converting chrono-acupuncture from the northern hemisphere to the southern, flipped the audience's minds upside-down as he led us to realise we really are 'down-under'.

Day Two Highlights

Professor Sun Jieguang from Hong Kong presented his clinical application of tongue acupuncture at his workshop. He shared results on patients affected by diseases of the brain, such as Autism

Spectrum Disorders and Parkinson's Disease, and demonstrated his technique.

Clare Pyers (Australia) presented her method of interpreting blood tests according to Chinese medicine. She was original and concise with her interpretations. We hope Clare writes a book on this.

During the lunch poster session, Phillip Strong from Australia spoke about the MoxAfrica project. This is a charitable organisation set up to research the use of moxa therapy for tuberculosis treatment in resource-poor environments. The impact of this project is definitely worth a look [www.moxafrica.org].

Another charitable organisation, run by Dr Bisong Guo from the United Kingdom, presented information on their project 'Immunity by acupoint' [www.shenfoundation.net]. Her discussion on the bigger picture of global health and patient education was interesting. It was a pleasure to meet and be in the presence of such a wise and elegant woman.

Following afternoon tea, Asako Murata from Japan discussed the tools of Japanese acupuncture-moxibustion and their influence on our tools used today in Australia. I found this to be very interesting.

Day Three Highlights

John McDonald (Australia) shared the results of his randomised, double-

blinded sham-controlled clinical trial of acupuncture's effects on mucosal immunity in perennial allergic rhinitis. It was interesting to see how the results looked, as I had been a control subject in the study.

Dr Carla J Wilson from the United States told us about the use of a Chinese medicine herbal cream as part of a mixed-methods treatment for HPV-related anal cancer. Dr Wilson emphasised the healing effects of patient education. Dr Denis Colin (France) followed this with his theories on the pathways of metastasis of different cancers using five-element theory as a base. He also discussed the importance of recognising and treating the spiritual aspects of the corresponding affected organs. Professor Chen Hao (China) then reported on a trial on relieving pancreatic cancer pain with electro-acupuncture to the *Huato Jiaji* points.

After lunch, Daniel Deng's (Australia) 'Body of evidence' workshop was very interesting. It involved noting the smallest of details on the skin and relating them to the yin/yang diagnostic method from the Su Wen. Daniel's energy and powers of observation are superb.

Dr Zhen Zheng (Australia) explained various acupuncture analgesia concepts

and how they can vary between individuals, as well as how to apply these concepts to clinical practice. Dr Zheng was very informative, articulate and inspiring as a leading researcher into pain management.

This was where my WFAS experience came to an end. There were sessions well on into the afternoon as well as a closing ceremony, but my flight home to the Gold Coast did not allow for these.

My overall impression of the conference was that it was well organised. The quality and quantity of food at the breaks and lunch was more than adequate. The translations of Chinese presenters were impressive, with translators clearly fluent in both languages and the concepts of TCM, and the headset equipment easy to use. There was a large selection of trade stalls exhibiting needles, moxa, beauty products, electro machines, herbal dispensing units, books, universities, infrared lamps etc.; in the three days of WFAS I didn't see it all.

Entertainment on the Saturday evening included Peter Firebrace from the UK launching his second CD 'Chinese Medicine Blues', using the traditional passing down of knowledge via song to rave reviews. He was clever, deeply

rooted in the classics as well as funny and musically talented. The Sunday evening Gala Dinner was wonderful, with delegates greeted on arrival with champagne and gathered outside the ballroom, which overlooked Darling Harbour. Everyone was dressed up and in the mood to celebrate. Dinner was delicious and the band was great to dance to.

Upon reflection of WFAS, the many varied interpretations and refinements of Chinese medicine was recognised. The modern has come from the classical, and loyalty to these roots was present in the sessions, which created a depth of understanding for me as a student. Attending WFAS showed me the many facets of our diverse profession. The presentations allowed me to recognise the passion and dedication inside the speakers, and it was exciting to ask questions and receive instant feedback as well as spark discussions with other professionals during the breaks.

To my fellow students: I recommend you use your student discounts while you have them, and attend the conferences no matter what stage you're at. I'm saving up my pennies for the next stop: AACMAC Melbourne 2014.