

History of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine In the State of Oregon Since 1973

By:

Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine Society of Oregon, Inc.

FORWARD

It has been my intention for a while now to write about the brief history and progression of acupuncture in the state of Oregon. My goal is to present a clear, non-biased description of the events since 1973 that culminated in the legalization of acupuncture in the state of Oregon. I believe it is important for all Oriental medical practitioners, and particularly the younger generation, to be aware of the Oriental medicine history of Oregon.

Although I am recalling the history of events based solely on my memory, I do trust the recount to be accurate. Should any important event have been left out, I welcome the input. Additionally, I give my apologies to those persons who may have been omitted and not given the proper recognition.

Finally, I wish to give my thanks to all professionals who are now practicing acupuncture in the state of Oregon, and especially to Dr. Gene Bruno and Dr. Robert Schwartz, who made it possible for all of us to practice our profession independently in this state.

By:

Dr. Wai Tak Cheung

President of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Society of Oregon

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I have heard from some of my colleagues that today many of the younger generation of practitioners of Oriental medicine may not be aware of the history of their profession in Oregon.

I hope that after reading what follows, all will know. If even one person who did not know this history begins to understand the importance of our professional roots and of our professional future together in Oregon, then writing this will have been worthwhile.

Hard work, luck and coincidence have made the legal practice of acupuncture in the United States possible. When President Nixon visited China in 1972, he opened many cultural as well as

political doors. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine were introduced to Americans in late 1972 as reports of acupuncture began to appear in the news media and in books.

Many Americans were having health problems for which they could not find successful treatment in the United States. Dorothy Barrett of Oregon had multiple sclerosis. She heard of Dr. Michael Yau Ferng and went to Taiwan in 1972 to seek treatment from him. Ms Barrett experienced such tremendous success that she wanted to make Dr. Ferng's skill available to others in the United States. Dr. Ferng came to the United States with a traveling visa in 1973 and began treating patients many of whom were Oregon residents.

Also, in 1972, two other doctors, Dr. Duke K. Won and his son Wing S. Won, both DCs and NDs, already living in Oregon before having obtained American citizenship, began treating growing numbers of Americans seeking Oriental medical care (before it was legal in Oregon). These doctors became well known as they successfully continued treating many patients in the state.

The Board of Medical Examiners (BME) soon heard news of their activities. The BME secretary had these three doctors arrested. Attorney had the doctors freed from jail within twelve hours, since there were no laws in existence pertaining to the practice of acupuncture in Oregon. The judge dismissed the case after issuing a warning to the doctors and made it clear that the practice of acupuncture was illegal in Oregon, except when done by MDs or DOs.

By this time many Oregonians had received acupuncture and benefited from the treatments. In 1973, many supporters, as well as patients (in particular Dorothy Barrett, Mary Wilson, Irma Silvon and Mary Lotina), took action by circulating a petition for the legalization of acupuncture in Oregon. They took the petition to Salem and talked to their state representatives to introduce such a bill to the Legislature. In order to have the bill pass, it had to be written with specific conditions. An acupuncturist had to work under supervision of a single MD. This meant that anyone seeking acupuncture treatment in Oregon had to first see an MD who would officially refer them to an acupuncturist. Every acupuncturist had to work with one supervising MD or DO. The use of moxa was originally excluded from the scope of practice, as the legislature felt its inclusion could prevent the bill from passing. I think moxa was too new or too exotic for them. Acupuncture was put under the control of the BME. There was no lobbying for this bill. The Oregon medical Association did not object to the practice of acupuncture by acupuncturists because it was under the MDs control. The bill became law on November 15, 1973.

The first legal private acupuncture clinic in the United States was opened in Lincoln City, Oregon. It was a very busy practice and patients had to book far in advance. Professor Kok Yeun Leung was the first acupuncturist at the clinic. He was later joined by Professor Shui Wan Wu and later by Dr. Wai Tak Cheung. Three of the first seven acupuncturists in Oregon were from Vancouver, B.C. and practiced acupuncture between 1973 and 1975. These early Chinese acupuncturists established the foundation in the Northwest for the growth and development of acupuncture in Oregon.

Dr. James Tin Yau So practiced acupuncture successfully for over 35 years in Hong Kong. Dr. So was brought to the United States by the National Acupuncture Association to work in the clinic at the UCLA Medical School. This clinic started in 1972 and was the first clinic in the United States. Dr. So arrived in 1973. In October 1978, Dr. William Prensley, Sr. Steven Rosenblatt and Dr. Gene Bruno took Dr. So to Boston, Mass., where they opened a clinic for him. Dr. Rosenblatt and Dr. Bruno then established the New England School of Acupuncture for Dr. So and worked with him closely as

instructors and also translated his two books into English. Dr. Rosenblatt and Dr. Bruno returned to Los Angeles in 1975 where they established the California Acupuncture College.

Dr. Cheung visited Dr. So in Boston in 1989, by which time Dr. So was retired. During the visit Dr. So asked if Dr. Cheung had any students. Dr. So believed passing on Oriental medical knowledge and continuing the education of new generations was vital to long term success of the professions. Dr. Cheung replied that he had no school, although he had 15 inters. Many hundreds of people, many DOs, MDs, and other professionals studied with Dr. So. This was the first acupuncture school in the United States. Later, many of his students opened acupuncture and Oriental medicine colleges and helped legalize the practice in many states.

One Chinese doctor was upset with Dr. So, feeling that he was selling out the Chinese people by teaching Oriental medicine to Americans. But Dr. So was proud of himself and he believed that the Chinese had very good knowledge to pass on to Americans. His teachers passed the knowledge to him, and now he wanted to pass it on to others. Dr. So could have made a good living in private practice, but he chose to open a school and to educate people about Oriental medicine. He told Dr. Cheung he hoped the proverbial stone tossed into the pond would send out endless ripples so his students, which would influence education and legislation throughout North America.

CHRONICLE OF ACUPUNCTURE AND ORIENTAL MEDICINE

In the State of Oregon Since 1973

1973:

Acupuncture became legalized in Oregon. An acupuncturist could only practice under a single MD's supervision. This law passed without opposition. BME regulated the licensing of the acupuncturists in the state. It was the acupuncturist's responsibility to find the supervisor. If no MDs were willing to accept them, then the acupuncturist could not practice. Moxibustion was not allowed. The BME licensing examination was established and offered twice a year.

1975:

The OAA was formed. Professor Mi Po Shu was the OAA president and the first member on the BME acupuncture committee.

Moxibustion was allowed by the BME as a heat therapy by acupuncturists. NDs and DCs tried through their board to get permission to practice acupuncture. Their reasoning was that they, too, are physicians and should be able to practice acupuncture. Their request was denied. There have been repeated lobbies since then to accomplish this goal. So far all the attempts have failed. There were only about seven acupuncturists, all Chinese, practicing in Oregon. We did not have any lobbyist to promote our profession.

1976:

Dr. Gene Bruno moved from California to Oregon. He was the first Caucasian to practice acupuncture in Oregon. Later Dr. So's students moved from Boston. The practice of acupuncture became more widespread and our profession as a whole became stronger. The need for a more determined and united OAA became even more critical to the future of our profession.

1977:

The OAA consisted of Professor Kok Nung, President; Professor Yet Sun Chan, Vice-President; Tize Kwok Tai, Treasurer/Secretary.

1978:

Dr. Gene Bruno requested privately from the BME that any MD or DO be able to make referrals. This was granted by the BME so that the single supervisor/physician was no longer needed.

Professor Kok Nung had a heart attack. Shortly later he moved back to Vancouver, B.C.

The OAA now consisted of Professor Yet Sun Chan, President; Professor Kok Yeun Leong, Vice-President; Dr. Wai Tak Cheung, Board member.

1979:

Professor yet Sun Chan had a stroke. Professor Kok Yuen Leung refused the position of president. He asked Dr. Wai Tak Cheung to take over the position, which he accepted. It took six months to obtain the OAA records and documents (because of the health condition of Prof. Yet Sun Chan).

1980:

OAA members joined with other American practitioners. The OAA members increased in numbers and strength.

1981:

OAA introduced two bills to the Legislature to:

1. Allow acupuncturists to see patients if they first obtained a diagnosis from an MD, DO, PC, ND or NP.
2. Have equal rights for insurance payment; to pay acupuncturists the same way that the MDs are paid for acupuncture treatment of the same conditions.

The first bill passed. At this point, we hired a part time lobbyist to help us pass our legislation. Dr. Gene Bruno, Eric Stephen and our lobbyist did most of the lobbying and other needed procedures. We were short of money, so Dr. Cheung asked all the members and others to donate money for the OAA objectives. About \$800.00 was collected. Dr. Cheung added \$2000.00 of his money for the OAA expenses.

Dr. Cheung proposed to open an acupuncture school under the OAA. Dr. Cheung wanted the school to be under OAA so more financial support from the public could be obtained to run the school more efficiently, and so more research could be done for the advancement of acupuncture in Oregon.

Eric Stephen helped a great deal in finding a part time lobbyist. Jim Hauser, Gerald Senogles, Stuart Greenleaf, Malvin Finkelstein, Betty Chen, and Dirk Friedt were also involved in the process.

I thank all of them for their efforts. Our greatest appreciation is given to Dr. Robert Schwartz. Without his efforts we might not have been free to do what we do today. Special thanks to Dr. Gene Bruno for his hard work toward achieving our goals. I hope that Dr. Gene Bruno will also write a brief history of events that occurred from 1976 to present. The Equal Right bill for insurance payment was proposed again and failed. OAA members did not work on this bill, as they thought it would not pass. I tried to convince everybody that it is like the root of a cancer that has to be eradicated, otherwise it would always be an impediment to our practice, Dr. Gene Bruno was no able to lobby since he was on the BME Acupuncture Committee. In the 1989 Dr. Gene Bruno, Dr. Robert Schwartz and our new

lobbyist Steven Kafoury joined forces and successfully passed our insurance bill and convinced the Governor to sign it into law.

Last, but not least, I want to thank John Ulwlling, former BME Executive Director and Dr. Joel Sere, MD, BME Acupuncture Committee Chairman, for all their help and support during our struggle along the way. I also thank all the members of the Acupuncture Committee for the work they have done over the years.

After the introduction of our scope of practice bill signed by the Governor of Oregon, Barbara Roberts, no additional opposition from OMA was attempted. The insurance companies fought us in our attempts to pass our insurance bill. Also naturopaths and chiropractors argued against our scope of practice Bill. We came to a friendly agreement with the lobbyist for the chiropractors. However, the lobbyist for naturopaths and their legislative spokesmen did not want our bill to pass.