



THE PATH TO ACUPUNCTURE

By K Gurunathan



Chito is Head of Department at New Zealand School of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (www.acupuncture.ac.nz).

Chito Pantig's introduction to the science of acupuncture was an unusual one. Catholic missionary, Father Franz Agthoven, opened this door for Chito in the rugged mountains of Mayaoyao in Northern Philippines, where access to modern medicine and medical services were basic or non-existent.

A graduate of Quezon City's University of the East Medical Centre College of Medicine, Chito had volunteered his services to help the rural poor. He was part of a radicalised student movement opposed to the military dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. He arrived armed with a bottle of aspirin and little else.

There he met Father Agthoven who, with just a basic knowledge of acupuncture, was successfully treating the locals. "Out in the

sticks you have to be resourceful. Doing everything possible with whatever you have at hand," says Chito whose nine-and-a-half years of training under an American medical system had not prepared him for the demands he faced.

From an upper middle-class family, Chito was groomed to join the affluent life. He had, however, volunteered to serve in the rural backwaters without the knowledge of his father. "The irony is I owe my idealism to my father. My parents were from a poor background but by dint of hard work and resourceful thinking, he moved up from being a delivery boy for a pharmacy to become a mango exporter to Japan and an importer."

"My parents never forgot their background.

When my father passed away, the funeral procession was about a kilometre long. The people he helped remembered and honoured him," recalls Chito whose own colourful journey was shaped by a sense of justice.

Serving the rural underprivileged meant being poorly paid. Even then, Chito spent his first pay of just 1,000 peso (NZ\$29.67) on basic emergency medicine. To supplement his medical toolkit, he tried to increase his knowledge of herbal medicine and massage techniques.

But it was acupuncture that paid the greatest dividends. "It became the love of my life," he says. Learning the required skills, however, was difficult. It was through self study using whatever books were available. There was also

political danger. In a twist of Filipino history, politics and culture, those using acupuncture were suspected of being communists by the Marcos regime.

Chito was part of a small but growing number of medical practitioners, associated with the now defunct Philippine Scientific Acupuncture Association, interested in gaining greater knowledge and competence in acupuncture. They were pioneers in facilitating the introduction of acupuncture into mainstream medicine. But the traditional access to this knowledge – through the Chinese Embassy – was blocked by the politics of martial law.

Then came a stroke of luck. In 1984, Chito established contact with an Australian ex-

priest, studying at the then Acupuncture College in Sydney (ACA). Chito had been introduced to him in the Philippines and had requested his help. The College sent an instructor to Manila to train 25 locals. "It was a marathon session of eight-hour days, six days a week for three months." At the end of the three months, the instructor recommended granting one four-year scholarship to a student to study in Australia. Chito was selected.

Not only did he finish his four-year course, he was one of the top scoring students.

He returned home in December 1989, in time to see his country shaken by an attempted coup against President Corazon Aquino. Chito buckled down to work at an NGO called

the Acupuncture Therapeutic and Research Centre (ATRC). Factional politicking within the organisation saw a disappointed Chito resign. Carole Rogers, then head of ACA, offered him a teaching position but the ATRC, now in turmoil, turned to him to head a Caretaker Committee to try and save the organisation.

The high pace of working, the long days and little or no holiday breaks finally made him decide on a quieter pace by retreating to a private practice in Manila. "The political environment in Manila started deteriorating and I feared for the safety and future of my two children. So I asked my ex-wife to travel to Australia and New Zealand to explore possibilities. New Zealand welcomed us and we re-established ourselves here," says Chito. ■

PROMOTING A RESEARCH CULTURE

By Kate Roberts

Kate Roberts at the AACMA conference



Kate Roberts is Chair of the Research Sub-committee.

For the last two years, the Research Sub-committee of New Zealand School of Acupuncture and TCM has been working towards the development of a research culture at the School.

To date, there have been some outstanding achievements, including:

- over 96 students successfully completed the two online courses focusing on research methods in health sciences, and graduated with the BHSc (Acupuncture) qualification
- an established journal club which meets two to four times a year and provides a discussion forum for the students, staff and practitioners who are members of New Zealand Register of Acupuncturists (NZRA)
- a research group that supports and develops staff's research profiles by providing mentoring and guidance in the achievement of research outcomes.

In addition, the School has achieved significant presence in the academic arena of acupuncture. Two key staff members, Debra Betts and Mike Armour, are currently undertaking PhD studies. A number of staff have gained international accolade by presenting their research findings at acupuncture conferences in New Zealand and overseas.

At the annual conference of The Australasian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Conference (AACMA) in Brisbane, Debra Betts won the best clinical paper for her presentation on threatened miscarriage, and Kate Roberts spoke about the School's progress in developing online learning modules. They were also invited to present at the NZRA conference in Wellington, along with Lucy Schwabe who facilitated a mindfulness-based stress reduction workshop. ■

Enrol Now for 2013!!



Good sleep is a key factor in staying healthy, avoiding fatigue and other related illnesses.

Research indicates that up to 25% of the New Zealand population may be affected by sleep disturbance and around 10% of those have unexplained causes for insomnia. The link between lack of sleep and physical and mental illness is one that is currently being explored.

A recent audit of the student clinics of New Zealand School of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine found that over the past five years, insomnia was the main reason for patients receiving treatment. This finding was of special interest, as acupuncture is well known for its benefits in the treatment of musculoskeletal pain and injury but less known for its effectiveness in treating other health conditions.

At the student clinics, patients are given tailored treatments as well as lifestyle and dietary advice, to help overcome complex conditions such as insomnia. Other conditions for which acupuncture treatments are effective include lower back pain, back/shoulder tightness, fatigue, headaches, flu symptoms, addiction, anxiety, depression, stress, asthma, eczema, itching and nasal/sinus obstruction.

Among the popular programmes of study are Bachelor of Health Science (Acupuncture) and Diploma in Tuina, Qigong or Chinese Herbal Medicine.

These programmes train students to be effective practitioners in the application of acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine.

The 2013 intake commences on 11 February, with limited places available for students aspiring to be primary healthcare professionals.

For enquiries, visit www.acupuncture.ac.nz
Email admin@nzsa.ac.nz
or call 0800 880033

THE SINOTI SAMOA EDUCATIONAL EXPO

By Bin Hu



On 13 July, some 500 students converged on the hall of Wesley Wellington Methodist Parish, seeking help to map out their future study pathways.

As New Zealand's first ever educational expo targeting Samoan youth and secondary students, the event was patronised by many Wellington-based educational institutions, including WelTec and Whitireia Community Polytechnic.

Concerns within the Methodist Church of New Zealand that the Samoan community lacks knowledge on how to gain entry to tertiary study or how to access other career paths were the main reasons this expo was held. It is hoped that the success of this expo will inspire similar events to be organised for the Pacific Island communities at large.

The colourful stand of New Zealand School of Acupuncture and TCM attracted a lot of interest, especially from curious students queuing to try the free therapeutic massage. It would be mission accomplished even if a small number of the students walked away having learnt something about traditional Chinese medicine. ■

A NEW JOURNEY BEGINS



From left: Lei Zhang, Li Lu, Tyrone Penning and Mengsha Qiao. Absent from the picture is Huaishu Xun

When five students enrolled in Diploma of Tuina at New Zealand School of Acupuncture and TCM last year, they made a pledge to themselves to walk

the distance to the end. Little did they know that the journey was not one paved with gold, but hard work and anxiety. Their conviction was constantly challenged, and there were

times when the students were so consumed by the study workload that they wondered if graduation was a mere impossible dream.

It was moments like this, however, that made them appreciate the relentless support they received from the teachers – George, Vesna and Sean. They could not possibly give up if the people who wanted to see them succeed would not let them.

This was the message that came through loud and clear at the small graduation ceremony on 13 August, when the students delivered their words of appreciation to the staff of the School for the time they spent together over the past two years. The students were especially thankful to the School for providing a caring learning environment and the tuina clinics for practical experience.

Armed with the qualification, the graduates are ready to embark on the next challenge of finding employment or setting up their own tuina clinics. Some are contemplating further study in acupuncture. Whatever their future course of action, they know that they can always seek shelter with the School, a place they will call home. ■

USING MOODLE FOR LEARNING

By Kate Roberts



Kate Roberts with son Sebastian.

Blended learning and online delivery are becoming increasingly popular both nationally and internationally.

For the last five years, New Zealand School of Acupuncture and TCM has been utilising the online classroom framework called moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment). It is a free source e-learning software platform, used in over 200 countries with users from universities, polytechnics, primary and high schools to hospitals.

Moodle has been used at the School to teach both partially-blended and entirely-online courses in the final stage of the Bachelor of Health Science (Acupuncture) degree programme. It is used as a central repository for student course information and also

as a means to enable class discussion and information sharing outside the classroom.

Moodle is based on a social constructionist pedagogy which means that every student has the potential to teach the teacher something and the students, as learners, become the discoverers of the information (social). It also encompasses the fact that by "doing", students are likely to remember.

Moodle allows all students to present their ideas and get feedback not only from the teacher, but also from the entire group of learners. By being able to transform the learning based on the needs of the group, the way knowledge is shared is adapted to suit the learner (constructivist).

This year, at the conferences of The Australasian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Conference (AACMA) in Brisbane and New Zealand Register of Acupuncturists (NZRA) in Wellington, I presented a paper on the School's use of moodle, including my findings from a student survey of all graduates of the degree programme. My presentation focused on what students liked and disliked about online learning and recommendations for future usage.

The survey found that students enjoyed the online discussions and the reduction in travel time, as well as the convenience of learning from home fitting into their busy life. The challenges, however, were mainly around the application of self-directed learning and technology issues.

It was interesting to note that, while over half of the students expressed concerns with the use of moodle, over 70% reported that they would happily undertake online learning again.

In the recent student feedback conducted by the School, there was an agreement that the use of moodle had enhanced students' learning experience.

For further information, please contact Kate on kate@nzsa.com. ■

Lucky Draw Winner

Congratulations to Serena Joe of Mei Ling Acupuncture & Natural Health Clinic, winner of the lucky draw for the proposed Master of Health Science (Acupuncture) online survey!