

Finding Inspiration in Vancouver: A Young Acupuncturists Revitalized

I am comfortable saying that I am still in my infancy when it comes to this profession. In the last five years of practice I've realized that I am looking into a very deep sea of knowledge. It is easy to understand how many young practitioners and students can be overwhelmed by the many various styles and techniques. That being said I feel that with my limited understanding I hesitate to write about my personal clinical experiences. In fact, without prompting by several acupuncturists I have great respect for, I wouldn't be writing at all.

It is important for younger acupuncturists to have a network of more experienced practitioners to inspire and help guide us through this endless ocean. Without my mentor, Peter Yates, who has encouraged and educated many students, I would never been introduced to many techniques and practitioners. It was through him that I learned that the basic principles of all acupuncture systems are the same and that only the expressions of these principles vary from system to system. He has been a constant source of information and inspiration to me. Recently, he inspired me to go to Vancouver to observe two great acupuncturists in their clinics. This experience has helped clear some of my confusion and assured me in my evolution as a practitioner. Every NAJOM reader should be familiar with both Mitzutani Sensei and Takahashi Sensei, and I have had the pleasure to be a fly on the wall in their clinics. I have seen both Sensei in Edo Kai seminars several times but to watch them practice without the stop and go of a seminar was to watch acupuncture at its highest level. While these two great practitioners have different treatment methods and prefer different styles the basic principles are strongly present and very similar.

There is a natural flow in their treatments which is smooth, unhurried and encompasses everything the patient needs. While each patient is given a customized treatment there is a strong focus on treating the whole body and balancing out energies. Mitzutani sensei, whose expertise is in Sawada Style, starts with most patients face down, needling areas of tightness which stand out. Takahashi sensei opens his treatment with Da Shin on the abdomen. While both practitioners start on opposite sides this first step is critical to balance out the body and give an entranceway into the next stages of treatment. Takahashi told me that if he leaves this out both the patient and himself feel as though the treatment is missing something.

Patients who have seen these practitioners for a few times easily follow the natural flow of the treatment. They know when to turn, when moxa will be applied and when shiatsu is added in. I must admit that whether watching smoke rise off patients in Mitzutani's clinic or hearing the rhythmic tapping of Da Shin in Takahashi's clinic, merely observing the treatment has a relaxing and therapeutic effect.

Within this flow of treatment each individual step is re-enforcing balance; front-mu, back-shu and transporting points are added appropriately to further benefit the patient. Symptomatic points are folded in seamlessly and appear to be a complement to the treatment rather than a focus on an individual complaint. Every aspect of the patient is taken into consideration. Mitzutani Sensei told me that he adds shiatsu to ensure addressing everything, "By touching everywhere you don't miss anything." This ensures that the patient receives a true whole-body treatment. The majority of both practitioners

patients have been coming to them for years. They are greeted like old friends instead of stoic medical practitioners. This is a true testament to the ability of these practitioners. Patients who continue to come in for years after their problem has been resolved understand that these treatments will help them stay healthy.

This experience has revitalized my commitment to this medical art and helped me uncover the never-ending path to become the best I can be. I strongly recommend that all students and practitioners alike seek high level acupuncturists to inspire them and aid in their own growth. I would like to thank both Mizutani Sensei and Takahashi Sensei for being so generous with their time and knowledge.