

*All the Acupuncture students that go through ICOM have their own unique story. Here we start to share some of them. The first contribution is from our oldest student of acupuncture – Anna. A graduate of the Class of '87 tells how she came to the profession and how she still thrives on her continued learning through teaching at the college.*

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Sometimes people ask me, what did it take me to study acupuncture? I tell them, it is a long journey which started in 1974.

My mother was diagnosed with lung cancer. I was 19 at the time and studying art history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I watched with great pain, disbelief and despair the suffering my mother went through having chemotherapy. I didn't believe, then or now, that such a violent way of treatment can be a "cure".

So I started a search for other cures. One day I came along a book by the American author, Jethro Kloss, "*Back to Eden*". He was one of the pioneers of the "back to nature" movement. I became an instant convert and missionary, and started preaching the virtues and benefits of herbs and healthy eating. No one listened.

Gradually I came to the realisation that one's attitudes to food and health are very difficult to change. Perhaps, if there was a way I could do something to make people feel better, then they would be more open to making changes in their lifestyles. So this is what led me to study acupuncture.

Dr Van Buren was a great inspiration in my life as an acupuncturist. Powerful in presence, he was a magician in practice.

I am in awe of the miracle that acupuncture can do. The magic of it never fails to inspire and amaze me every day. My first miraculous experience of acupuncture was when I had just graduated in 1987. I met my neighbour, a young woman in her early twenties, who was just coming from the doctor with pills in her hand for severe migraine and stomach pains she had had for a week.

I immediately told her that I could help her with acupuncture. I still remember, she was sitting in the armchair and I needled two points: Stomach 36 and Kidney 10. Her migraine and stomach pain were gone by the end of the treatment, both to her and my amazement. I would like to say here that my practical experience of needling at this point was virtually non-existent. In those days the practical aspect of the training at the college was very different to how it is now.

Nowadays, students in the final year express their fears of starting their own practice. I invariably tell them, that their knowledge and level of practical experience is ten thousand miles ahead of where I was when I graduated. Commitment to learning and enthusiasm is always rewarded. Acupuncture is very powerful – with only a few needles, simple treatments can do magic far beyond what our minds can comprehend.

It does provide a tremendous sense of satisfaction and joy to see the relief that acupuncture brings to people, many of whom have had years of pain and misery. On top of this it is often compounded by unpleasant tests, exploratory surgeries, scans and medication.

I feel very fortunate to be practicing at the college. Teaching is the best learning for me. The questions students ask require a constant renewal and re-evaluation of one's knowledge and understanding. I am reminded of one of my favorite quotes by Hermann Hesse:

*“whether you and I and a few others  
will renew the world  
someday remains to be seen.  
But within ourselves we have  
to renew it each day.”*

Sometimes I still get in the mode of preaching, and perhaps I have more listeners now, but gradually I am learning that the most profound thing one can say is nothing. I recognise that *“it is not our purpose to become each other. It is to recognise each other, to learn to see the other and honour him for what he is.”* (Hermann Hesse)

With all the pain that my mother’s illness and death brought to me, I do equally acknowledge with gratitude that it is this experience which steered my life into a path I would have otherwise never needed to take if “all was well”.



Anna supervising in the ICOM teaching clinic in 2006