

The Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine College, Berkeley: A College Transformed

By Abba Anderson, LAc, MS, MA

To paraphrase Mark Twain, the rumors of Meiji College of Oriental Medicine's demise have been greatly exaggerated. Renamed the Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine College, Berkeley (AIC), this college is very much alive - and thriving.

"When you walk in the door, you can feel that there's something special happening here," said Raymond Victorio, MOM, DOM (FL), the college's new president. "There's a calm enthusiasm in the air, the feeling of a bright future." As an experienced practitioner and a professional educator, Mr. Victorio brings a unique set of skills to his leadership position at AIC. He established the first ACAOM-accredited school in Florida in 1992, served as president of the Florida State Oriental Medical Association, and is a former secretary to the board of the American Association of Oriental Medicine.



AIC-Berkeley Chairman Dr. Shuji Goto and President Raymond Victorio pose for a photo during an open house at the college. "Meiji has offered a masters degree in Oriental medicine for more than 10 years," said Victorio, "and with our new name, we also have a renewed commitment to what has always set the school apart. What hasn't changed are the things that students say bring them here: the exceptional clinic, the small, friendly classes, and a schedule and location that's convenient for commuters."

The students and faculty recently rallied together to keep the school open despite a momentary teach-out plan. Immeasurable hours of talking and listening resulted in the arrival of Mr. Victorio, new board

chairman Dr. Shuji Goto, several new board members, and the college's new name. Dr Goto brings years of experience in medical education as president of Goto College of Oriental Medicine in Japan, and has been acknowledged by San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown and former Governor Pete Wilson for his significant contributions to the field of Oriental medicine. He has traveled to China countless times to bring back new developments in medicine, and to provide AIC students with a special opportunity to study abroad at Tian Jin Hospital & University in China and Goto College in Japan.

"The changes have been absolutely positive," said Mary Stewart, a faculty member and 1998 graduate. "There's a feeling that everybody is working together, a momentum and movement that's very exciting. Under Raymond's leadership, the school administration is accessible, friendly, responsive and responsible, which was not always the case, and is unusual in any school."

At AIC, Dr. Goto and Mr. Victorio are continuing a working relationship established several years ago at the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, where Dr. Goto was the board chair and Victorio was the dean of academic studies. Now they have teamed up to realize an expansive vision for integrative medicine education at AIC. That vision is two-fold. It includes the integration of traditional Chinese and Japanese medicine with Western medicine, and a model of curriculum integration that better combines theory with clinical experience. The focus is on competency-based learning. The curriculum is grounded in traditional Chinese medicine, but is complemented with traditional Japanese medicine. At every opportunity, the school offers parallel clinical and classroom learning to synthesize the student's skill-building and critical thinking for clinical problem solving.

"The strongest thing our clinic has to offer is its excellent faculty," said new clinical dean Dr. Andrew Karozos. "I'm very impressed by their integrity and dedication to the students." Karozos is a medical doctor who has worked in emergency rooms throughout Northern California, most recently as chief of the emergency department at Barton Memorial Hospital in South Lake Tahoe, where he established a department of integrative medicine.

"Integrative medicine is about bringing the strengths of Western and Oriental medicine together, using the best of both worlds, interactively, for the benefit of the patient. We know that Western medicine is better for acute care, but Western medicine is at a loss when it comes to chronic disease, which is exactly what Oriental medicine is really good at treating," he added. Dr. Karozos began studying Oriental medicine in 1994, after acupuncture treatments allowed him to avoid surgery recommended by Western doctors.

The school's clinic is one of most common reasons students give for choosing AIC. "For me, the clinic was remarkable," said Sally Criss, a former accountant who graduated in August 2002. "I feel confident about starting a practice, and I think that my clinic experience is the reason."

Criss added that the clinic gave her a chance to see acupuncture work on serious conditions she hadn't expected to run into, listing conditions such as breast cancer, leukemia and kidney failure among the patients she treated at AIC. For example, she said, "I treated one patient just days after he'd had a stroke."

"You have to know when to send a patient to a Western physician," observed AIC third-year student Joy McIlvaine. "I had a patient with dangerously high blood pressure who had stopped taking his medications, and I counseled him to talk with his doctor. He did, and with continued acupuncture treatments, I've watched his blood pressure gradually come down ever since."

Aligning with the vision for integrative medicine, AIC has added a department of advanced studies that provides continuing education and opportunities for research and publication. Koji Ichihashi, LAc, director of the new department, brings to the position a 500-year family heritage of traditional Japanese medicine and 50 years of personal study and practice, both on his own and with dozens of Japanese masters. "The Japanese tradition is itself an integrative tradition," Ichihashi explained. "It combines the philosophy of classic theory with an understanding of modern life. It's not an antique; it's fresh."

AIC works closely with leaders in the profession to build a solid future for Oriental medicine. The college is actively engaged in the process of curriculum revisions, both in California and nationally. Mr. Victorio recently served on the California Acupuncture Board's Curriculum Task Force, has represented the AAOM in the development of the current doctoral standards, and is also working on his doctorate in educational leadership and change.

"There are many wonderful people in our profession, practitioners and educators, working together to refine the education with the goal of serving the patient," said Victorio. "After all, the health of the patient is the reason we are all engaged in this labor of love."

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