The 29th Annual American Academy of Medical Acupuncture: Brief Highlights

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THE 29TH ANNUAL AMERICAN ACADEMY of Medical Acupuncture (AAMA) Symposium, held April 6–9, 2017, in Pittsburgh, PA, was spectacular! The conveniently situated downtown hotel afforded views of rivers, bridges, a park, a mountain, and even of Heinz Field, home of the Pittsburgh Steelers. The locale invited attendees to explore their surroundings easily on foot, being greeted by snow showers upon our arrival and warm shirtsleeve sunshine on our departure.

Program Chair Laura Bowman, MD, DABMA, assisted by David Miller, MD, LAc, together with their committee, succeeded in designing an exceptional program. Everything that the audience might be interested in was presented in either workshops or lectures. Perhaps most important was the ability to interact together as an audience *and* also with the speakers. A wide variety of national and international experts presented their work and opined on controversial issues. My personal favorites were “Neuroimaging Acupuncture Effects for Neuropathic Pain and the Role of Objective Outcomes in Carpal Tunnel Syndrome,” presented by Vitaly Napadow, PhD, LAc, of Harvard and “Acupuncture and Immunomodulation,” presented by Nadia Volf, MD, PhD, and Leonid Ferdman, MD, of the University of Paris.

Many of my colleagues truly found the pediatric workshops splendid. John Reed, MD, of the Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, reminded us in his Joseph M. Helms Founders’ Lecture, “Acupuncture for Healing Ceremonies in the Garden of Spirit,” of the importance of the “Spirit.” Shiu-Lin Tsai, MD, of Columbia University Medical Center, and colleagues were the Research Paper Winners for their work on “Traditional and Auricular Battlefield Acupuncture for Pain in the Pediatric Emergency Department.” The Best Poster Award went to Ronald Glick, MD, et al. for their work on “Acupuncture or Massage Therapy for Cancer Related Pain: An Open Pilot Study.” The protocol was developed by Patricia Smith, LAc, who was also the acupuncturist on the study, along with a

team of pain researchers from the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. There were many, many other outstanding presentations and, obviously, I am not able to discuss the entire symposium. We had the chance to learn and network with others. The AAMA gave The Gala Dinner that had a seemingly endless supply of delicious offerings, catering to every variety of discriminating gourmet, and was capped off by dancing the night away. The Symposium was a wonderful educational experience as well as a chance to relax.

The AAMA Symposium was worthy of your attendance, as evidenced by participants coming from North America, Europe, and as far away as Australia. If you missed the 29th Symposium, we plan to capture some of the lectures and research in future *Medical Acupuncture* issues. There are also recordings from the event available at the www.resrec.com website. I hope you are now fully motivated to attend the next Medical Acupuncture Symposium, which will take place in Kansas City, MO, April 12–15, 2018.

Acupuncture research is catching up to the art and is helping us to redirect our understanding of its mechanisms. The better we understand our treatments, the more favorable impact we will have on our patients. That was another message I took away from the 2017 Symposium. Opioid use can be curbed with acupuncture. We still have a lot of people to convince, but, with our current awareness of the problem and public awareness to try acupuncture instead of habit-forming drugs, I believe we are on the right path to eventually solve this dreadful problem.

The journal, *Medical Acupuncture*, is your key to understanding the field. The more you read, the more you learn. The AAMA website is rich in Continuing Medical Education and information that will strengthen your knowledge and skills. Although mechanisms are very important to understand, it is still the art, in my opinion, that will push the research.

—Richard C. Niemtzow, MD, PhD, MPH

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