



NCCAOM Diplomate Spotlight: Carol DeMent



Once a quarter the NCCAOM draws the name of a recently recertified Diplomate who has completed the NCCAOM Diplomate Demographic Survey. The individual receives a voucher for a free recertification and an opportunity to be featured in a Spotlight Article on Facebook and on our website.

The winner of the January 1, 2017 Diplomate Demographic Survey drawing is NCCAOM certified Diplomate of Acupuncture Carol DeMent.

When I was going to acupuncture school, I had an externship treating people going through acute withdrawal from drugs and alcohol and it was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. When I first began my private practice I was inspired to create a program of my own.

1. What attracted you to the field of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine?

I have always been drawn by the holistic nature of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, (body/mind/spirit; nutrition, movement therapy, herbs, needling) and especially by its roots in Taoist theory. I believe in practicing within a healing paradigm that places humankind squarely within the laws of nature, one with the universe. I had studied nursing in the late 1970s and found it too mechanized and hierarchical, and feared that the movement toward high tech medicine would further diminish the human aspects of healing, disempower the patient and ignore the great importance of preserving health rather than treating disease.

In the practical realm, I also liked the thought of having a private practice where I could create a work environment that met my needs as well as my patient's needs.

2. What was your first impression of the NCCAOM®?

FEAR!! Everyone feared the certification tests while I was in school. The exam formats were changing from hands-on point location exams to paper location when I took the exam; it was the test run of the new system and so very scary to be the guinea pigs. I was sure I had failed because I wrote my answers on the wrong sheet but was given credit anyway.



3. What would you tell someone who is thinking about applying for certification with the NCCAOM®?

Study hard, take a prep course or use books of questions to test your breadth of knowledge. Know your stuff for the joy of knowing your stuff, and you will be fine.

4. Why did you think that it was important to complete Diplomate Demographic survey?

A: It's a volatile time in the field of acupuncture. Our scope of practice is under attack from physical therapists, massage therapists and other healthcare providers. It is important to know how acupuncturists are faring against these pressures. Real data is important when we speak to legislators and health departments about our profession and how it is being practiced by real acupuncturists.

5. What do you think are the most beneficial aspects and challenging aspects of your field?

The benefits include helping to heal your patients, and helping them to understand the paradigms of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, which in turn empower people tremendously to make different (healthier) lifestyle choices. It is also gratifying to see our profession gain the recognition it deserves from medical doctors and other health professions, who become referral sources. However, we have a long way to go in this area. Acupuncturists should be able to take a certification course that gives them the right to have hospital privileges so we can see our patients who end up in the hospital, or provide routine pain control to reduce use of painkillers. So many areas in which we could make a difference!

Most challenging is the squeeze for those of us who accept insurance to maintain our practices in the face of increasing bureaucratic interference. I think this is only going to get worse. Those who do not accept insurance, or have been unable to be credentialed as a preferred provider due to closed insurance panels, have an increasingly difficult time making a living wage when they are competing with paneled providers.

6. What do you wish other people knew about the field of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine?



A: People need education as to the range of conditions acupuncture can treat very effectively. This is slowly changing...we have moved from a "pain-condition only" mindset to a greater understanding that acupuncture can address mental health conditions, digestive conditions, respiratory illnesses, allergies and so on. People also do not realize the length and depth of training and practicum we go through, the board exam process, etc. Many seem to think that we just do a six-month certificate type program and this belief is now being supported as physical therapists, massage therapists and other providers of health care have started using needles and other modalities of Oriental Medicine with minimal training.

7. Where do you practice?

I have a private practice in Olympia, Washington. I share a lovely building in a quiet, professional office park with two other acupuncturists and 3 counselors.

8. Is there a particular specialty or interest as part of your practice (OBGYN, Orthopedics)?

I have a general practice, treating a variety of conditions. I enjoy working with the elderly, with people who are struggling with emotional stability, and those with digestive or respiratory conditions, as well as with pain conditions. I generally refer out for pregnancy care.

9. As an acupuncturist, what trends do you see in your profession?

A: This seems to be a moving target! Five years ago, I would have said acupuncture was trending toward growth in its professional stature and greater integration into Western medical care. Interest in advanced studies was high. Now, it seems that trend is reversing. We are being seen as technicians rather than full partners in healthcare, and bits of our scope of practice are being co-opted by other professions. Also, the proliferation of community acupuncture clinics, where simple treatments are provided with little in-depth assessment and limits on treatment modality, lends itself to a public perception that little skill is required to do acupuncture. While I appreciate the role of these clinics in helping to support acupuncturists outside of the insurance bubble, and in providing services to those on limited incomes, I think a better model could be devised. The problem is exacerbated by the rules outlined in the insurance contracts paneled providers are required to sign. It's complicated...

10. What might someone be surprised to know about you?

A: In addition to doing acupuncture, I am a novelist! My first novel, Saving Nary, is about Cambodian refugees. My second, which I hope to finish in a year, will have a very

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interesting Chinese character who is by profession an acupuncturist/herbalist and who settles in rural Montana in early 1900s. I am very excited to write about TCM in a fiction format.

11. What do you do when you aren't working?

Write novels and ride bicycles mostly. I have taken bike trips in Europe, SE Asia, Canada and many states in the western US. Hope to expand eastward in the coming years as it is a wonderful way to explore a country.