



NCCAOM Diplomate Spotlight: Esther Moux



In this Spring issue of the NCCAOM Diplomate Newsletter, we recognized March as Brain Injury Awareness month by spotlighting one of our distinguished NCCAOM National Board-Certified Acupuncturists, Esther Moux, Dipl. OM (NCCAOM), L.Ac. who is an Acupuncturist at the Intrepid Spirit Center at the Fort Belvoir Community Hospital in Northern Virginia. Ms.

Moux also serves on the NCCAOM Veterans Affairs-Department of Defense Certificate of Qualification Taskforce.

- 1. It is wonderful that you are an NCCAOM National Board-Certified Acupuncturist at Ft. Belvoir Community Hospital. How were you able to obtain your position at the Intrepid Spirit Center as an acupuncturist?**

I applied through usajobs.com. During my school training and in practice in San Diego, I often worked with service members. There are seven military bases there, which consist of a large population who found this medicine useful for their care. We had outreach programs and volunteer opportunities for veterans and active duty patients during my training as well. I think a combination of this prior experience, and a need to be of service is why I got hired. I am passionate about Traditional Chinese Medicine and treating/educating others on how it can help them.

- 2. As March is Brain Injury Month, how do you see your role as an NCCAOM National Board-Certified Acupuncturist at Ft. Belvoir Hospital making a difference in improving lives of active military and their family?**

Acupuncture is powerful medicine. I have seen first-hand the success it can have with acute and chronic pain, sleep, and gut issues. Many service members will tell me that after treatment their Traumatic Brain Injury related headaches have gone from 8/10 to 0/10; or perhaps they slept better than they had in years. Some simply find they have more energy, are more positive, less anxious, and stressed. I am usually booked out one month in advance for new patients so the services are in demand. More acupuncturists are needed in the care of this population!



3. How were you initially attracted to the field of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine?

I came in from the patient side of things. I had a herniated disc in the low back and was in chronic pain for nearly two years. I had the good fortune of finding an acupuncturist that helped. I clearly remember my first visit, leaving his office, and being able to get in and out of car without crying from pain. I thought I don't know what this is but I'm going to find out. I ended up leaving New York City for San Diego to study this medicine.

4. What would you tell someone who is thinking about working in the Department of Defense as an acupuncturist?

Do it. We need you here! I think takes a certain personality type to work within the military system. You have to think outside the box to heal patients, yet we are in a system that has structure. DOD is definitely opening up to this type of care as the opioid and chronic pain issues are coming to the forefront in policy discussion here in DC. The air is ripe for these types of interventions. Also, the patient population is very unique. It is never one thing. At least at my clinic, we have patients with co-morbidity of TBI and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Chronic pain is just the tip of the iceberg. Chinese Medicine is a good fit for complex patient care. We approach whole systems. As the classics say, treat root then branch. This is what we have to do here.

5. What do you think are the most beneficial aspects and challenging aspects of practicing acupuncture?

Benefits: As a healer, I know I am on purpose. There is nothing better than to get paid for what you love doing. It is not a "job". It is a calling. Therefore, patient satisfaction is very rewarding. Many of them never heard of acupuncture or even considered doing this as part of their care. They are always quite surprised at how much better they begin to feel. I also enjoy teaching self-care modalities such as acupressure or Qi Gong. Hospitals now talk about patient centered care. This is a concrete way to do that by empowering the patients and being a part of their healing journey.

Challenges: Getting more acupuncturists as standard of care in hospitals throughout the country. We need to be part of the solution for opioid/chronic pain crisis. We should be first in line of defense with this issue. I think for a lot of newly minted acupuncturists coming out of school need to have a place to be employed. Not everyone is an entrepreneur. It saddens me



to see that many people who study this medicine no longer practice after five years. As a profession, we need to not have so many “camps” and see the big picture. The schools need to be included in this discussion as well. We all have skin in the game when it comes to getting this be an accepted modality across the country. It is medicine and it should be considered as such. Simple.

6. What do you wish patients who have not had acupuncture treatment knew about this medicine?

It will rock your world.

My three second speech usually includes such things as: “We raise endorphins (your feel-good hormones) and lower cortisol (your stress hormones). You might get a slight sense of euphoria after.... kind of like runner’s high without running. Who doesn’t want that?”

I tell them that: “the needles don’t hurt. It is not like getting a flu shot since they are much smaller and solid.... and (bonus) you have an excuse to take a nap.”

They are always shocked at hearing this, but then when it happens, they are really excited about coming back. In the military world, naps are in short order. Many of the service members have not had a good night’s sleep in years.

I also tell patients that by regulating their nervous system, they sleep better, and thus tissue repairs more efficiently so we can improve pain in a deeper way. Many patients have not thought of their pain in this way. However, since TCM treats mind, body, AND spirit; it is like a balm to the suffering I see with the service members.

7. As an acupuncturist working in an integrative setting, what trends do you see happening in the future for our profession?

Working in an integrative environment is fabulous because we co-treat, and work with each other to get a plan of care, and goals for patients. I can see how they’re doing with PT, psych, or neurology, for example. We compliment this care with TCM. Right now, the clinic is training several of the providers in functional medicine which is a systems-based approach to care similar to Chinese Medicine. I consider it to be a bridge for east-west medicine. The framework of treating root cause is there in both. I think the medicine of the future will be a whole health approach to patient care. We have five pillars in the Intrepid Spirit clinic which include: nutrition, movement, sleep, mind-body practices and integrative treatments.



Health care is slowly beginning to adapt and change as people become more aware of what is possible in terms of treatment. However, much education is needed on the power of Chinese Medicine. There are many people who don't know what we do. We treat more than pain. As practitioners and lineage holders of this medicine, it is our duty to have an accessible language to share what we do with the public and other providers; otherwise things get lost in translation. There are opportunities for research as well as integrative treatments. Each one of us has to set a flame wherever we are. Doing our part so TCM is understood and used in every single healthcare facility in this country. Chronic health issues and opioid dependency are rampant problems. As acupuncturists, we can be part of that solution.