



NCCAOM Diplomate Spotlight: featuring Sheridan Horning, Dipl. OM. (NCCAOM)[®], LAc

By Chris Minar, SMS, Coordinator, Digital Marketing and Communications

Once a quarter the NCCAOM draws the name of a recently recertified Diplomate who has completed the *NCCAOM[®] Diplomate Demographic Survey*. This is a very important survey that provides NCCAOM and the profession with much needed demographic information for projects such as federal recognition.

The survey winner receives a voucher for a free recertification and an opportunity to be featured in a Spotlight Article on Facebook and on our website. We encourage all Diplomates to participate in this important survey to help advance the profession and



have a chance to win a free recertification.

The recent winner of the Diplomate Demographic Survey drawing is NCCAOM Certified Diplomate of Oriental Medicine, Sheridan Horning.

Sheridan Horning, Dipl. OM. (NCCAOM)[®], LAc moved to Portland in 1999 because of the thriving art and music scenes, and has enjoyed going to concerts, shows, theater, and art performances ever since. Sheridan took her first Qi Gong class as a teenager, and throughout the first decade, her practice waxed and waned; however, it was something to which she always returned.

When Sheridan began at Oregon College of Oriental Medicine (OCOM) in 2004, she was very excited to have wonderful teachers and became consistent once again. Qi

gong is a significant component of her self-care routine, and she has enjoyed sharing it with family, friends, and patients since the pandemic. For the past ten years, Sheridan has lived at Portland's Kailash Ecovillage. It's an apartment complex turned into an urban experiment in sustainable agriculture and community living. Sheridan studied Equity Informed mediation and is interested in the potential of conflict resolution supported by acupuncture and qi gong. Working with patients, first with massage and then acupuncture over the past 20 years, has taught her how mindful communication, active listening, and understanding nonverbal cues can have just as much an impact on their well-being as other approaches. This quality of perception is something that can benefit both individuals and the interpersonal dynamics within relationships.

Question 1: It is wonderful that you are an NCCAOM National Board-Certified Acupuncturist practicing at RiverWest Acupuncture Portland, OR. Tell us a little about RiverWest Acupuncture?



Former board member and alumnus of the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine, Lisa Francolini, took over RiverWest Acupuncture in 1998. I joined in 2016, because I respected all that she had done to grow the practice and appreciated the opportunity to devote my focus on providing patient care, since our support staff handles billing and scheduling.

Question 2: How were you initially attracted to the field of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine?

As a teen from Indiana, I resonated with Taoism and East Asian history and philosophy, which was practically the opposite of how I was raised. I continued this study at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. There, I signed up for an overview class on Chinese medicine but ended up dropping it. As a skeptical humanist, I was wary of spirituality and energy but interested in consciousness and potential. I was struck by the model of the human biocomputer which could be reprogrammed with intellectual and behavioral methods. I moved to Portland, and I applied to a back page newspaper ad to a work-trade program at the Heartwood Institute, a residential massage school on 220 acres in northern California. There I was surrounded by nature, and introduced to yoga, tai chi, and many different bodywork modalities. I began noticing how these physical practices shifted something in me. When I had my first shiatsu session, I unexpectedly felt extreme frustration and annoyance out of nowhere, that miraculously disappeared by the end. Afterward, I learned that my Gall Bladder and Liver meridians had been the focus, and that corresponded to the Wood element and the emotion of anger. My mind began to open up to the possibility that physical techniques could impact in broader ways. I moved back to Portland and went on to study massage at East West College of the Healing Arts and became fascinated with myofascial release therapy. I studied fascia, including scientific research noting the co-location of acupoints and openings in the connective tissue. I realized that meridians were subtle physical structures, present in the anatomy, and changes there could impact human physiology. I also dabbled with Western Occultism, and learned that there were Qabbalistic relations between planets, gods of different pantheons, elements, incenses, foods, colors and more. This was fascinating but not very applicable. When I realized that Chinese medicine also had intricate systems of correspondences between all of those categories of things, but used the systems to impact health, I was hooked. Plus, during massage school, acupuncture helped with insomnia and after, with injuries sustained from a major car accident. I practiced massage for just 2 years before I began my education in Chinese Medicine. I was happy to help relieve physical pain for my patients, but I wanted to be able to address all their



other symptoms, too. I also wanted to nerd out and get a Masters degree, and I had found the perfect field to do so.

Question 3: What do you specialize in as an NCCAOM National Board-Certified Acupuncturist? Are mental and emotional concerns a major part of your practice?

Because of my 20 year background with massage, I am very proficient in treating pain, and always love to see the transformation that occurs during a treatment. I value active listening and work to create a therapeutic relationship with a patient, so when their pain goes away, they are curious about what else acupuncture can do for them. So many people have shared about their anxiety, depression, addiction, PTSD, and stress, and that organically has become a significant component of my practice.

Question 4: Could you share a little about why these specializations are important to you?

When people experience different degrees of trauma—physical, emotional, and anything in between— it is held in the fascia of the body. These events are recorded in the connective tissue as micro to macroscopic knots, adhesions, and stagnations, which in turn can affect internal medicine issues along with musculoskeletal. Whatever subsequent emotions are felt as a result of trauma are unprocessed and will remain fixed until the tissues are released. The body holds onto the emotions and the emotions hold onto the body. My goal is to use acupuncture and therapeutic conversation so my patients become more comfortable with the flow of their emotional process so they can help release their own blockages.

Question 5: Is there an experience within your specialty which stands out? If so, could you briefly share what made that experience significant to you?

I was able to support one of my patients through recovery from alcoholism. I have seen her transform her life, to become a more engaged parent, spouse, and community member. She's learned to have more boundaries and to center her own self-care. She is inspiring.

Question 6: With the NCCAOM's focus on Diversity Equity and Inclusion, do you have any experiences or efforts in treating underserved communities or breaking barriers using acupuncture and herbal medicine?



When I needle auricular points, I love to share with my patients that the Black Panthers deserve part of the credit for bringing acupuncture to the US. In 1971, they commandeered Lincoln Hospital to provide effective, affordable addiction treatment to their community. During the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, I volunteered my acupuncture services to local activists and organizers. Online, I circulated a formula developed in Hong Kong to treat activists in 2019 after tear gas inhalation. I donated bags of the herbs to protestors in Minneapolis and in Portland. Early in my career, I filled in shifts at the acupuncture program my friend Erin DeRamus started at the Native American Rehabilitation Association. For many years, I have prioritized educating myself about the impact that racism and other forms of oppression have on the health and experiences of marginalized communities. With the study of Intersectionality, I drew parallels between basic yin yang theory and the targets and agents of oppressive systems. Yang is associated with superior, white, male, young, active/able-bodied, expansive, and the yin analogs are inferior, black, female, elderly, disabled, reclusive. When considering that perpetual division of the dominant vs the other, we can extrapolate that the more yin categories that someone is in, the more exponentially they are disadvantaged by white supremacy and other institutions of injustice.

Question 7: What do you think are the most beneficial aspects and challenging aspects of practicing acupuncture and herbal medicine?

I absolutely love the work I do and know that the beneficial change in one patient's health extends far beyond that individual. Family, co-workers, and communities are also impacted. Insurance coverage is the biggest challenge, since many patients can't afford out-of-pocket costs.

Question 8: Do you think NCCAOM certification is important? Why have you maintained your NCCAOM certification?

Yes, NCCAOM certification is important, because it promotes the consistency of education and standards of our profession. Many of my patients use insurance and companies require NCCAOM certification. I want to be accessible to them. Although I love Oregon, remaining certified allows me to have an easier time relocating to another state.

Question 9: As an acupuncturist, what trends do you see happening in the future for our profession?



I hope we will continue to recognize the impact that institutions of oppression have on health and well-being. I'm glad that we're talking about diversity and inclusion now, and I look forward to having required curriculum for cultural competency around race, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status and all manner of identities. Without this education, we will undoubtedly harm some of our patients. When our implicit biases are unchecked, even our best intentions can have negative impact. This is unacceptable in the field of medicine.

Question 10: Thank you for sharing so much about the incredible work you do. Please let us know a little about yourself. What are some activities you enjoy outside of work? Do you have any hobbies or talents you'd like to share?

I am launching a new business called Cultivate Slack, at cultivateslack.com, where I teach virtual qi gong and self-care classes for caregivers and others in the healthcare field. I taught at East West College of the Healing Arts from 2013-2018 and have missed working in education ever since. I studied Equity Informed mediation, and I'm interested in the potential of conflict resolution supported by acupuncture and qi gong. I've lived at Portland's Kailash Ecovillage for over 10 years, where I garden and build community with my neighbors. I enjoy wildlife photography, and I'm looking forward to dancing to live music again when the pandemic gets more under control.