

NOVEMBER INTERVIEW— IAN STONES BSc Hons. Lic Ac. MBAcC. - Acupuncturist



What influenced you to become an acupuncturist?

This is something I often get asked by my patients. As with a lot of therapists, it was following my own treatment that I turned to a career in acupuncture. There was something absolutely fascinating about the whole process and I really enjoyed chatting with my acupuncturist and learning about Chinese medicine. I loved the way he explained my health in relation to Chinese medicine and the philosophies behind it. It really seemed to strike a chord with me. It just so happened that I wasn't particularly enjoying the career I was in and, when I was moaning to my acupuncturist about it, he suggested I attend one of the open days at the college where he trained. This I did and duly decided to jack in a career in the fire service and start afresh, spending my house savings on a degree in acupuncture!



What training did you do to work in your chosen profession?

I attended the College of Integrated Chinese Medicine in Reading where I completed a 3½ year Bachelor of Science Degree in Acupuncture. In theory it was a part time course attending the college every other weekend but, with the immense workload and home study that was required, I would say it was more like a full time course. We studied all aspects of traditional Chinese medicine, along with anatomy and physiology and conventional medical sciences.

Since qualifying, I've completed many additional training courses and also completed a two week study trip at the Guangdong hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Guanzhou, China. I was a founding member of the first national fertility network launched by Zita West in 2009 and have attended many annual training days covering a raft of fertility related issues. I was also fortunate enough to spend a full day in their IVF clinic following their head embryologist.

What aspect of your job do you enjoy most and why?

There are many aspects to my job that I love but, overall, it's about making people feel better and improving their overall quality of life. However, with acupuncture it can be a lot more profound and deeper than that. Acupuncture is a lot more than just needles and I spend a lot of time working with patients to truly understand all aspects of their life and how this is impacting on their health. This could be about their work / life balance, their diet or other stress factors and emotional upsets. Inevitably it's a mixture of everything. What I truly love is seeing patients making long term meaningful changes to their lifestyle and diet and the positive impact this has on their overall health. When patients come in and say they're feeling more relaxed or that life just isn't getting to them as much then I know we've really hit the mark.

How did you get involved with Durham House?

It was, as with most of these sorts of opportunities, by complete chance! I have worked for the British Acupuncture Council ever since I graduated. It was when one of my colleagues at the office took a call from Galin asking to advertise an opportunity for a practitioner that my colleague said to me "you live near Farnham don't you?" By pure fortune, I was looking to relocate one of my practices so I got in touch and joined the team from the off. It's been fantastic being part of such a dynamic clinic from day one and seeing it grow to the thriving busy clinic it is today. I love that we have such a diversity of practitioners in just one clinic and that we really pull together as a team, which undoubtedly gives the best for all our patients.

What tips would you tell people who are worried about having treatments with you?

A lot of people are usually very interested to hear about acupuncture but inevitably the big stumbling block / question is about the needles! A lot of people say to me "but I'm scared of needles" and it takes some convincing for them to believe me when I say that it really doesn't hurt! Acupuncture needles bear no resemblance to any needles which are used for blood tests or injections. Acupuncture needles are incredibly fine and are solid unlike the hollow (and often blunt) needles used for injections. Insertion of the needles is done using a guide tube and a gentle tap and the vast majority of the time nothing is felt at all. Some points do give an ache or a tingle but this usually settles down during the treatment. Over the years I have been in practice I have treated many patients who are "scared" of needles and all of them have found the treatment to be very relaxing. My tip would be to come and try acupuncture and you'll soon realise there's nothing to worry about at all. It's not uncommon for patients to fall asleep during treatment; acupuncture can actually be deeply relaxing and a great way to unwind and destress.

What would you tell someone who might be considering a career as an acupuncturist?

GO FOR IT! It's the best job in the world. In fact it's hard to even see it as work. I absolutely love what I do and get to really make a difference to people's lives. However, you've got to be prepared to put in the work at the beginning and to stick at it. I've known many acupuncturists return to their previous career within just a short time of starting out because they weren't prepared for the slow start. Being a therapist takes work and dedication; it's not like some jobs where you get a qualification, start work and earn a salary straight away. It takes time but the rewards definitely follow.

What do you wish other people knew about your profession?

I think people have a lot of misconceptions about acupuncture and its uses and probably don't appreciate how in depth and holistic treatment can actually be.

The main misconception is why people have acupuncture. This has certainly changed over the years but many still think it's only for pain, back problems or to quit smoking (something I've never treated). Quite often potential patients contact me and say "can acupuncture help with...." and no matter what is at the end of the question, the vast majority of the time the answer is yes no matter what. With acupuncture we always look at the symptoms that patients are experiencing rather than the western medical diagnosis. In Chinese medicine we see that symptoms of ill health are a sign of imbalance. Through detailed questioning we aim to establish the root cause that's underlying the main issues and correct that through treatment and lifestyle and dietary advice. I think it's also important that people realise how much training we all go through and how to ensure they are seeing a reputable and well trained practitioner. Currently there is no statutory regulation for acupuncture so it's important that people are aware of how to find a good practitioner. It's important to ensure that your practitioner has completed suitable training, at least to degree level and that they are fully insured and part of a professional body.

What do you enjoy doing when you aren't working?

With a young family my spare time is mainly taken up with them and we enjoy heading down to the beach (the bonus of living in Hove), swimming, baking and sometimes just lounging around in our pyjamas watching a film. Life generally seems to revolve around food and I particularly love going for Dim Sum or cooking a good old fashioned Sunday roast. We've just adopted a cat (Treacle) and she's bringing much joy to us all. Given half a chance I'd love more time to play golf and to dust off my guitar. Many of my patients are quite surprised to hear that I'm an ageing rocker and used to play in a band back in the day! We have a keyboard in the house so I'm trying to teach myself some piano and am also hoping to get myself an electric drum kit one day!