

In the last three months, acupuncture in Australia has attracted much media attention nationally and internationally, mainly due to two studies<sup>(1,2)</sup> published by RMIT researchers. One study examined the quality of two brands of commonly used acupuncture needles, and the other evaluated the feasibility of providing acupuncture service to patients attending the Emergency Department in a public hospital. These two studies are completely different, but have touched two core aspects of our practice: how good our tools are and how acupuncture could be integrated into the current health system. The public does pay attention to media reports of those studies and you might find your patients asking you about them. Both studies are reviewed in this issue.

Closely linked to the quality of acupuncture needles and quality standards is an article by Dr David Graham, Chair of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Technical Committee 249. The committee's main responsibility is to develop standards for Chinese medicine. This article introduces to you the role of the ISO Technical Committee 249.

The Australasian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Annual Conference (AACMAC Melbourne 2014) was recently held in Melbourne. Being so soon after the WFAS Sydney 2013 8th World Conference on Acupuncture in November, AACMAC Melbourne 2014 was on a small scale. The quality, however, was not compromised. One of the highlights of the conference was the Victorian Health Minister Hon David Davis MP's speech at the opening ceremony. In his speech, Hon David Davis reviewed Chinese medicine registration in Victoria and then Australia, and outlined six key characteristics of a strong and mature profession. He encouraged Chinese medicine practitioners, and any other health practitioners, to present a united front to governments, regulatory bodies and the public; to work collaboratively with other health professionals; and to always place patients' care at the centre of our practice. His speech was inspiring, and was like giving this profession a formula of tonics to strengthen our righteous Qi so that we have the strengths to deal with our own deficiencies and any other 'invading' Qi.

It is becoming a common practice that acupuncture is used to assist in in vitro fertilisation (IVF). The recent debate looks at how effective acupuncture is in this area and whether it is better than placebo.<sup>(3-4)</sup> In a comprehensive review published in this issue, the authors look at this question from a different angle. The paper outlines the benefit of a healthier mental status to enhance the success of IVF, and examines if acupuncture improves the mental

status of women who undergo IVF, therefore contributing to the positive outcome of this therapy. This review draws our attention to a key aspect of acupuncture practice, which is to calm the *Shen*.

The second paper in this issue is a member survey of the Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association (AACMA). The study was conducted in 2006, and eight years have since passed. We decided to publish this paper because the result provided a snapshot of characteristics of members and their practice at that time. It is an important reference point for future studies of members of Chinese medicine associations.

In this issue, Professor George Lewith, a professor of integrative medicine from London, United Kingdom, was interviewed. This refreshing interview provides us with a strategy for dealing with media about complementary and alternative medicine. Professor Lewith's message is not dissimilar to Hon David Davis': we have to do our groundwork to make Chinese medicine or any other CAM a mature and strong profession.

We encourage readers to write to us about your thoughts. One paper in the last issue, entitled 'Does Chinese Medicine Consultation Share Features and Effects of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy? Using Traditional Acupuncture as an Example' has raised some discussion among our readers. We publish two letters to the Editor in response to this paper in this issue.

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## References

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