

ACADEMY DELEGATES VISIT CHINA

Eighteen members of the Academy participated in a People to People Ambassador Program delegation to the People's Republic of China between June 2-11, 2002, visiting Beijing and Chengdu to learn more about pain management service in China. People to People, an organization promoting friendly relations among all countries through the medium of scientific, professional and technical exchange, arranged the meetings between our delegates and our colleagues in China. People to People affords participating medical delegates unprecedented opportunities to visit other countries, to see the existing medical facilities, to learn about emerging healthcare trends, to share common ideas or interests, and to find common ground for future exchanges.

The Academy sponsored delegation went to China to study traditional Chinese medicine and to see the westernization of modern China's medical system. For many of us the real surprise was finding the westernization of Chinese medicine to be farther along than we had imagined. After a presentation by Academy member Maurice Gregory, MD on HIV-related pain



syndromes, Dr. Yan Sun, Professor at the Beijing Cancer Institute, surprised many of us when he casually said, "Qi Gong never cured cancer, we use Western approaches to cure cancer." He later clarified that traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has its place in the spectrum of therapeutic options, but when the patient is quite ill and needing immediate therapy, he preferred Western methods to TCM. In chronic illnesses, when speed of therapy is not important, he advocates for TCM.

Professor Sun acknowledged the importance of TCM in caring for the body, mind and soul of patients living with cancer.

In Beijing the delegates received an overview about the modern Chinese medical system and current educational efforts to standardize medical education in China using English as the language of instruction. We toured and heard many fascinating presentations at the Cancer Hospital (Institute), Beijing Medical University's Neuroscience Research

Institute and No. 3 Hospital affiliated with the Beijing Medical University. In each facility several of our delegates presented a short talk about current treatments and strategies used in Western medicine and in exchange we received rather extensive lectures about ongoing research and emerging treatment concepts. Academy member Jeff Buchalter, MD spoke on the role of interventional approaches to pain management and IASP member Jackie Gardner-Nix, MD addressed the role of



pharmacotherapy for the management of chronic non-cancer pain. Professors Wan You and Luo Fei presented the frequencies used for electro-acupuncture and the types of clinical situations where electro-acupuncture was useful.

Many of the Chinese presentations focused on the evolving use of the scientific method to identify the elements of TCM that are important therapeutically. Basic science laboratory research was being used to explain what occurred during TCM treatments. The delegates were impressed by the amount of modern imaging, electro-diagnostic and other types of diagnostic and treatment equipment that was available. Beijing healthcare appeared to be as modern and as up-to-date as the Western medical facilities we knew in the USA. While many Chinese in these facilities received Western medicine by choice, TCM options remained available and were functionally integrated into the Western methods. Both TCM and Western medical students received cross-training in the other disciplines, and about 40% of the TCM curriculum was said to be in Western medicine.

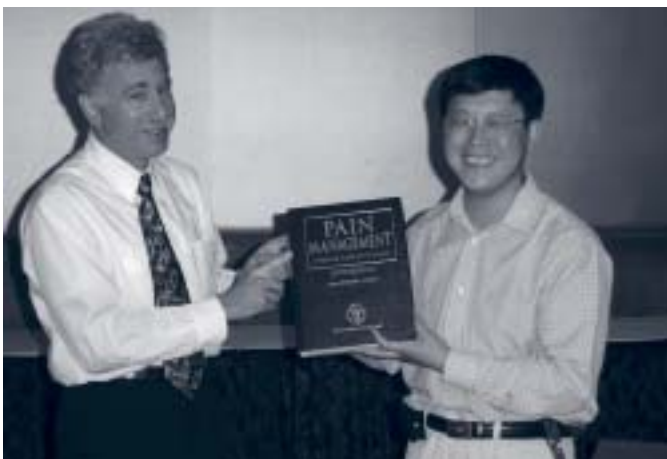
A day of site-seeing in and



around Beijing allowed the delegates an opportunity to see the famous Tian'anmen Square, Forbidden Palace and Great Wall. Tian'anmen Square was clearly the heart and soul of old Beijing. The Square was the place where old China met new China, with Communist/Maoist references still present, yet contradicted by a constant stream of young people, tourists, street vendors, making the Square have a festive atmosphere. The visit to the Great Wall provided an opportunity to go to the Chinese countryside where temperatures were cooler and the air was cleaner.

A brief airplane ride brought us to Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province. Our group visited a rural medical facility in the small town of Huanglongxi, experienced Chinese Opera in an open air theater, observed and held baby pandas at the Panda Breeding Center and then spent an entire day at the Chengdu University of TCM. The University permitted the delegates to have an entire morning in the clinical areas observing TCM treatments, talking with practitioners and patients and touring the TCM museum containing an extensive collection of therapeutic materials (not the usual pills, potions and





lotions known to Western practitioners). The afternoon at the University was dedicated to professional exchange with Academy members James Colson, MD presenting information about spinal cord stimulation and James McKory, MD discussing the role of complementary and alternative medicine in the USA. Our Chinese colleagues discussed the role of acupuncture in TCM and current acupuncture research and analgesic strategies.

Throughout the trip family members of delegates participated in their own independent program. They visited the Temple of Heaven, Beihai and Jingshan Parks, the Lama Temple, a Hutong neighborhood and school, and the People's University campus in Beijing. In Chengdu they saw the Huanglongxi village, Giant Panda Breeding Center, People's Park and the archeological site at San zing Dui.

Academy Past President William Harsha, MD, organized many pain management delegations through People to People in the early 1990s. Many Academy members were fortunate to participate in these delegations that visited Russia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Vietnam

and Thailand. In 2000, Drs. Kathryn and Richard Weiner committed the Academy to again work with People to People and planned the 2002 trip to China. I assumed leadership of this delegation and worked with the People to People staff and the Chinese coordinators to provide effortless travel, first-class accommodations and the best meals most of us have ever had. Delegates were able to earn 18 hours of CME credit.

The Academy is committed to bringing high quality pain education for its membership. In addition to the Annual Clinical Meeting, practitioner credentialing, facility accreditation, newsletter, journal and textbook, the Academy will sponsor future "once-in-a-lifetime" educational experiences for members. Future delegations are planned to visit Chengdu and Tibet July 13-24, 2003, Cuba December 13-21, 2003, Peru in November 2004 and Northern China and Mongolia in April 2005. More information will be available as it is developed, so please continue to read *The Pain Practitioner* and set aside time to travel with other pain management professionals. It is our diversity that is our strength!