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Space to Heal

Brendan Armm, DAOMc, LAc, decided holistic medicine also means creating a holistic clinic where there is a positive connection between AOM and a healing space. We asked Brendan about this green approach and how it has translated into his practice.

QR: Kindly introduce yourself.

Hello, my name is Brendan Armm. I am the founder and director of Lotus East-West Medical Center in Santa Monica, California. I completed my doctorate in acupuncture and Oriental medicine, specializing in Orthopedics, pain management, and integrative medicine. I teach Oriental medicine and meditation to the graduate-level students at Emperor's College of Traditional Oriental Medicine.

The center I founded opened its doors on August 1, 2007. In addition to acupuncture and Oriental medicine, it offers contemporary biomedicine (medical doctors), naturopathic medicine, psychotherapy/health, and wellness consulting. This

ground level, five-treatment room medical center is the first certified "green" holistic caring center in Santa Monica and is located in the heart of Santa Monica's medical district.

QUR: What made you decide to set up a green clinic?

I wanted to "go green" because of my focus on whole health. Whole health applies to the patient and to the environment. Also, I am into "green" because this is the community I am familiar with -- eating at vegan restaurants, preparing foods with farmer's market fresh ingredients, and practicing with a yogic intention. To me, it made sense as a holistic practitioner treating the whole patient to recognize the whole community and the whole planet; it's one and the same. This is treating both internally (internal medicine) and externally (the environment).

QUR: Was it difficult to achieve this?

The process of making a green business was a joy, even as it requires attention to detail and listening to new ways of building. Although some costs seem to be more expensive initially, I found that these costs usually result in saving money in the long run. Additionally, there are many inexpensive "green" options, even less expensive than building conventionally. It takes creativity, too. I love to take individual pieces of furniture or leftover flooring and put together something "bigger" by using what is available. I appreciate Feng Shui -- color, design, shapes, and angles. On another thought, when posed with the challenge of remodeling an existing café into a "green" medical center, approaching it with environmentally conscious sales people and with environmentally approved materials makes all the difference.

QUR: How much did your notion of what "holistic" means feed into your decision?

Patients who are passionate about working on themselves respond best here at Lotus East-West Medical Center. It takes mindfulness and gratitude to make a positive transformation. We

use this model and go beyond working individually by building community and by promoting other green businesses as well. Importance is placed on being present with each moment and with each patient and each business we work with. When we become present, and therefore quiet inside, we see the value of the whole person, the whole construction of a center, the whole community we live in, and the whole planet we inhabit.

QUR: How has the green aspect changed a patient's experience of your clinic?

Patients comment frequently on the warm and welcoming feeling when they are inside our center. They feel at home, and they say they are able to leave "their negative baggage outside the door." They feel a sense of peace and stillness. This sets the right intention for the healing process.

Patients interested in environmentalism and those who experience environmental allergies are drawn to visit our center as well. We offer literature about the steps we took to make the center the way it is. The patients see more color, more attention to detail, and they feel the warmth of each item which is made with the "wellness" of the whole planet in mind.

QUR: Has the green concept been fruitful in ways you hadn't originally anticipated?

Actually, we found that the green element has proven to be a valuable marketing strategy. We have been graced with the press being interested in our center. Students from surrounding Chinese medical schools visit us each quarter to see what "green" means. We are invited to lecture and present at conventions, expos, festivals, earth days, etc. on "being green." As such, we have entered into another market in addition to the medical field. We have moved into networking with other environmentally conscious people and businesses.

QUR: Where would you suggest practitioners interested in going green with their clinic begin research into green

designs?

If you are in the Los Angeles area, Santa Monica's Global Green "Sustainable Works" program is a great place to start on your journey of making a business (or a home) green. They are not a retailer, but a free green resource center operated by the city of Santa Monica. They are a nonprofit business. Living Green, in Culver City, is a second great place for ideas, products, and green services. The place is like a small Home Depot, with great staffing and amazing craftsmanship. Again, being green doesn't have to mean buying expensive. Green also means reusing old materials and products. As such, if you look you can find great items for the office online at craigslist.org. There is a lot of stuff out there, and if you patiently search, you will find.

QUR: Has the larger environment changed your own approach to AOM as a practitioner?

As the environment changes, our approach to medicine adapts. Stress continues to impact us in every-changing ways, and as practitioners we constantly seek the root – the stress--not solely the symptom. It takes a good listener to see that stress has many faces. Also to this effect, my concern for the environment has inspired me to be active in the search for organic and local herbs and to use these when available.

Building a center was a grand endeavor, with patience and balance as the foundation for success. These perspectives are also the roots of sanity. This comes to me each time I walk into the center where I feel so blessed. I feel the good energy from doing my part. I see the other practitioners happy to be together, and we meet regularly to envision new ways of promoting the center, our community around us, and the environment. Indeed, this interest in my environment has influenced how I practice. I practice being present with each patient and to be grateful for all the abundance.

Complete online article:

<http://www.aaaomonline.info/qiunity/08/04/4b.html>