

Here are Colleen Timmons, L.Ac. "pearls of wisdom" on Practice and Success Building:

(This is from notes from a month ago, so I'm hoping it's accurate! Colleen?)

General Points:

1. Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses. Do what are your strengths, get someone else to do what you are not. (Examples: Talking about the medicine vs billing)
2. Develop compassion and not attachment:
She recommends keeping patients as patients and friends as friends.
3. Do not become attached to the results. If you do, your patients may get into getting well to please you, instead of for themselves, which is where the real healing needs to happen. Leave your ego at the door. You and your patient are both subject matter experts: they know more about themselves than you do. Leave your baggage at the door too. (Don't project your "stuff" onto them.)
4. Research aside, be patient and persistent. "Tend the garden": if you do, the blossoms will come.
5. Continue to take care of yourself: rest, hobbies, vacations, etc.
6. Aim to not make it "feel like work". Referral to practice should be a joy, not a burden.
7. Establish office hours even in the beginning instead of running yourself ragged.
8. Colleen is a "generalist" versus a "specialist" because she is "easily bored".
9. She has only common herbs and patents at her office, otherwise she sends her patients to Longevity or Gen Min for patents and formulas.

The Journey:

- 1.) While waiting for the results of the CALE, get into a special project for yourself.
- 2.) The first and second years of practice are the most challenging. Know and accept this.
- 3.) Colleen has always had "front office staff" to make the appointments & do the billing.
- 3.) Her first experience was at the PCOM clinic: at that time, the clinic took on a few graduates who could start a practice there with a fee split. The college was much smaller then.
- 4.) Then she moved to Mission Valley at an office with therapists of other modalities. She had a room and the use of the Office Manager. It was good to refer to the other therapists; in turn, she too was referred to by them.

5.) At the same time, she was referred to the Linda Vista Healthcare Center by a clinical therapist at her Mission Valley location. This was a good experience, with many Laotian and Vietnamese patients who surprisingly were primarily not familiar with acupuncture treatment. The fee was and still is \$16.22 a treatment, so it was great experience, but not great income.

6.) Next, she moved into practice with other Acupuncturists and a Chiropractor. She went from two to three rooms, then back from three to two. She had no Assistant and still does not: she feels she has a better working relationship with her patient this way, so two patients is her maximum at the same time.

7.) She received a call from a chiropractor friend who was setting up a practice in a Victorian home in San Diego. She and Carol Elliott, joined her in partnership, however, each of them have separate owner agreements on the house. So now, she is a landlord too, as there is rental property in the building. Likes having a chiropractor under the same roof too.

Practice Building and Retention:

1.) Start to network now!

Get to know other practitioners, visit their offices and/or take L.Ac.'s to lunch to see how they do it. Join network groups. Family and friend "communities" are good sources of patients too, versus treating family and friends: sometimes you can't be their best practitioner.

2.) Start doing speaking events now!

There are opportunities right here at the college. This is good practice! (See Gina Rubbo in Admissions, or Jennifer Turner, Symposium and Outreach Coordinator)

3.) Practice recruiting patients as an Intern. (Use your "free" PCOM provided Intern cards: hand them out!)

4.) Get your name out there however you can afford and seems right to you:

examples: Yellow pages, Chamber of Commerce listing, Rotary clubs, TV, Pens, one woman left her card in all the books in the local library of certain diseases she treats!

5.) Go to Health Fairs: PCOM is also a source to do this: See Gina and Jennifer.

6.) Talk about it to anyone you meet!

7.) Colleen doesn't believe in offering the first treatment free, or any free. Charge a reasonable fee, \$45/tx was mentioned, I believe, as Colleen's fee.

8.) Colleen does not accept credit cards, only cash or checks.

9.) She treats, then calls her patients in two days.

10.) Working 18-20 hours week in her office works best for her,

between teaching and life....

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