

Clara Cohen: Whether you are a TCM student or a practitioner, this show is for you today. I have Dr. Haley Parker from Virginia University of Integrated Medicine.

She is the clinical Director of Community Outreach and Partnership. What does that mean exactly? Well, we're gonna talk about what can student do in school in order to learn more about how we're gonna work once outta school. Specifically integrating oncology, integrating gynecology, integrating internal medicine, working with other practitioners, communicating with patient. We talked about advocacy. Advocacy of our medicine. We talked about teaching. She has such a wealth of knowledge. Now, if you're practitioner, you are going to benefit so much, but if you're still a student, listen carefully because this is your future we're talking about.

Are you ready? Let's go.

Welcome to AcuPro, a show dedicated to making Chinese medicine and acupuncture. Easy to grasp and fun to learn. Hi, I am your host, Clara Cohen. I support practitioners and students and like you in changing the world one patient at a time. My goal is to share my passion for TCM and empower you to achieve superior patient care.

I love to showcase the amazing benefits of acupuncture because after all, acupuncture rocks.

Clara Cohen: Welcome to the show, Dr. Haley Parker. I'm so excited you're here. First of all, because I wanna hear your story 'cause you are such a go-getter.

I mean. You blew my mind. First of all, you are a teacher, a professor, you are a clinician, you are a practitioner. You have a doctorate in acupuncture, in Chinese medicine, you work in Virginia, but you are board certified in a lot of states. So you gotta explain this whole thing to me because I found it so fascinating how you went and did so much work in order to basically yeah. help our medicine go everywhere. So I wanted to say that first of all, you work at the same university at the Virginia University of integrative Medicine of Dr. Lixing Lao, who we had on the show in episode 84. And if you guys have missed it, the link will be in the show notes below because we had so much fun.

So sweet. And his students actually went on YouTube and left a lot of comments. They love him 'cause they were like, oh my god, Dr. Lao, we love you. So it was just so sweet to hear that.

So first of all, I would love for you, Dr. Haley, to tell us all a little bit about your journey. 'cause I know you were an athlete, prior to doing TCMI assume, and where you went and how you ended up obviously working at Virginia University of Integrative Medicine.

Dr. Haley Parker: Yes. Well, so my story is always kind of fun for me to listen to too, because I really didn't think I would ever be an acupuncturist, let alone working in. Higher education, let alone working on building our profession in an integrative medical platform. The whole person healthcare model.

So the path really chose me, and that's often how I like to tell people that when you keep your opportunities open and you just start taking them as they come, it's really interesting where they go. So you did mention I was an athlete, I was a diver. So springboard: bouncing, jumping, twisting, and a lot of crashing and so.

Being an athlete my whole life and taking a lot of crashes, I had some injuries that just were not healing and by the time I was in my mid twenties and retired from college athletics, my body was screaming at me and it was just so unhappy and really modern medicine didn't really have much else for me to do. And so my grandfather took me to his acupuncturist who did acupuncture, along with chiropractic, some nutritional counseling and some other holistic modalities. And it changed my life and it was so eye-opening to me that I could actually do something to help heal. Not just manage a symptom that I wanted to know what just happened.

And so ultimately I interned with this doctor. I became inspired by this medicine. I went to school for this medicine, and then through my journey as a practitioner, I worked with so many different people who had just never even heard. Of acupuncture or trying East Asian medicine for their ailments. So it became more and more of a calling for me to try to teach people that this was an option for them, empower them and give some of the power back to the patient to take better care of themselves.

'cause I think any clinician out there loves patients, but they wanna see their patients getting better and we really need the patient to be a part of that too. And doing their part the other 23 hours of the day, they're not in our office seeing us. So. Anyhow, I really wanted to teach acupuncturists how to be a better ambassador to the field and how to work together with other medical providers for referrals and also helping to do a partnership in medical care plans to get our patients better exponentially. So I ultimately evolved into working with the university where I helped to run their externship programs building the community partnerships and working with other organizations to try to give our

students not only experiential practice in integrative clinical settings. But also working with other allied healthcare professionals who are promoting integrative healthcare because our generation of practitioner probably had to like, you know, break the ice and had to really work on just getting recognition for acupuncture. I believe the next generation of acupuncturists and even the generation after that, will really get the privilege of working in integrative healthcare settings and being able to deliver this medicine to a much broader patient base.

Clara Cohen: I love that. That's a great story. First of all, I love that your grandpa took you, 'cause that's an older generation that is going, hey. Did you know about acupuncture? Let me take you there. So I think that's awesome and I'm glad you had such a good experience that it changed the trajectory of where you ended up.

So I love that. I love your passion. I can hear it through your voice when you speak. I can see that. For people that are listening. What do you define as integrative? Because when I build my wellness center, this is exactly what I wanted. I wanted a multidisciplinary place where all practitioners could come together to help a patient.

Because every medicine as its limitation, we all know that. And then so, something else could help including conventional medicine, right? Working together for the better of the patient together. So I love that you're wanting to connect all the dots for the good of each patient's health. So explain to us what do you see as what is integrative in basically in reality for a patient?

Dr. Haley Parker: Similar to what you're saying, I mean, it's using the right tool for the job and I'm a visual type person, so I'll always explain like all the spokes to the wheel where western medicine, even surgical Intervention or pharmaceutical intervention has a place on that wheel. But there's so many other spokes that help to make that wheel well-rounded, including just recognizing and interfacing with your stress, being able to come back to your center through techniques like breathing or mindfulness being able to manage your. Stress by interacting with your environmental factors, right?

Helping with your economic and your financial status in your job or in your family life, and all of these other social factors that maybe we don't necessarily see under our umbrella of healthcare, but how to really maintain ourselves. And sometimes that takes a professional, like a coach or a counselor to help us interface. I think the beautiful thing with traditional East Asia medicine is a lot of those pillars of health are already embedded in our tradition, such as rightful

thinking, rightful eating, making sure that we do have our social connections. We already have a spiritual component to our medicine, so we understand that our.

Microcosm really reflects back into the macrocosm and vice versa. And so how to help a patient understand where they are in their trajectory and how to get them where they want to be, which is more usually on the side of wellness, right?

Clara Cohen: That makes total sense. I know you guys at the university, you do integrative care, what does that mean for a school? Does that mean that it's for the patient and the students' learning? Are they getting exposed to different medicine in order for them to understand how they can better serve their patients, integrating those other medicines?

Dr. Haley Parker: That's a great question and it's a very multifaceted facility that we work in as well as like we have many objectives at all times. So because we are an higher education facility and we are teaching than future generation of acupuncturists, we really wanna arm our practitioners to be some of the best in the field to really go on to promote the medicine for us as a university. It's in our success when our students are succeeding, and that's usually by giving them the vocabulary to talk to allied medical professionals. Being able to read charts or be able to go in and network with say endocrinologists or gynecologists or oncologists and whatever patient base that they really have a passion to work with in the future. Additionally, it is really important for us to be able to have a high reputation so that when our students do go on to graduate, anyone who sees Virginia University of Integrative Medicine. On that resume knows that this student has that training. Of course our patients are gonna reap the benefits of well-rounded education , of our students and our practitioners who are versed in it every single day. I'm sure many of the practitioners who are out there already, who've been in practice for a couple decades have done the hard work of being self-taught, right? We had a basic understanding of education when we went to acupuncture school a while ago, and yet we had to continue to learn and we had to figure out what worked for us and what didn't work for us.

We had to figure out how to talk to certain professionals and maybe talk a little differently to other professionals. So we're bringing all of that education and that practical experience to our students as well. We employ a variety of different medical providers to be able to deliver education and give their take on how to be best suited for when they get out into the real world and into the wild practicing medicine, and not only practicing medicine, but building a business in the acupuncture field.

Clara Cohen: I think that's the tough part for many schools, right? Because there are obviously a lot of schools in North America and Europe and all over the world, and I think there were links missing when you went to school. When I went to school. So one of the links that was missing for us was definitely no business class at all, like zero.

We didn't get anything about business. We had no idea what we were in for, like at all. And I had rose glasses. I'm like, oh, now that I know Chinese medicine, everybody's gonna come to me, right? Like of course they are. No. So that's the first thing. The second thing we didn't have is we were taught, depending if you did an acupuncture or a doctorate, so I did a doctorate, so it was a little bit more.

You know, expanded when it came to gynecology and internal medicine and you know, oncology. But it was very minimal and definitely one of the thing that was also missing is communication, not only with the patient, but with other healthcare practitioners and how do you communicate all this. So my question for you: how do you teach someone, or how do they understand that when they come outta school? They have many hats. They're not just a TCM or Chinese medicine practitioner. They have a lot of hats they had to kind of wear and. Not to be scared of that because they go in school like we did because we're passionate about learning Chinese medicine.

That's why we went in. Right. But there's other things that come into play that were not necessarily told to us at the time. You do that at the university, you integrate a lot, but a lot of people don't quite get that. So how do you, share that information and really explain to people that they need more than one hat.

Dr. Haley Parker: That's another great point. I think that's the nature of our field and you know, to your point, I remember a teacher when I was in school saying to me, okay, you can be great at acupuncture. You could be the best at acupuncture, and you can love acupuncture. Of course. That's why we came into it. It doesn't mean everyone else is. And really it's our job to be able to teach those patients why they should love acupuncture too, or just at least try it. So when I teach my students about the role that they're taking on. I try to bring 'em down into reality and the current politics of our medical system here in our country of most other medical disciplines have a big board behind them, or they have been around for such a long time. Just the structure of our different state laws, the legislation the lobbyists that are out there pushing for advancement of scope and our profession's still really in its infancy in this country. You mentioned Lixing Lao before and he's been phenomenal at just even. Bringing legitimacy to our field with all of his research and legalizing the practice. But with that, we have to continue to push that momentum because we have to fight

for our voice. And so acupuncturists tend to be quite rebellious. We are already against the flow of normal, major medical. However, we also have to unite together. And with that advocacy work is so important along, within remembering that in our field. We don't have certain residency programs or next steps after school. We, we get education in passing our board exams to make sure that we are certified to be able to practice this medicine safely, but then going on to study business or being allied with somebody in a combined care clinic to be able to help take us under their wing and teach us how to run a business.

That's still a big part of being able to pay our bills and being able to provide a service to our community. It's a fair exchange and acupuncturists do have this tendency of being so loving and so giving and from a heart of service, but we forget that there's still this exchange in taxes come around, you know, quarterly and

you can't pay those with a smile or a big heart. So the advocacy component, the business component. As well as being a people person. Now, most acupuncturists are wonderful people. They come into this field being that they want to help, which is so sincere and so genuine and really so endearing. However, being able to communicate your complex thoughts and being able to relate to your patient, your population base, the audience you're giving a lecture for, or the doctor that you're looking to get referrals from. Finding that rapport and finding that connection, and so that does go back to that point you made of having great communication skills, written oral, as well as you know. Thinking outside the box of different advertisements or ways in which you can have exposure to bring business in. And ultimately, I think everybody wants the ideal of generating word of mouth and bringing in more and more joy to your business, as well as your being able to pass on your great healing techniques to everyone that you meet.

Ad: Do you feel like your TCM College prepared you to grow a thriving, busy practice? I know mine did not. It saddens me and sometimes even angers me to see so many acupuncturists giving up their practice because their TCM College did not teach them business skills. This is the root cause why so many practitioners struggle to make an impact change lives.

Using the knowledge they acquired in TCM School, you have the TCM knowledge, but you are missing a crucial piece, how to market your services because if nobody comes through your doors, you cannot make an impact with anybody. I've built a successful, busy, thriving practice. Now I wanna make sure

that you do too, because the more of us are successful out there, the more patients will be impacted.

I will be teaching two master classes on how. You can grow a successful practice and crush it on social media without feeling overwhelmed because I know this is scary and I wanna make it easy for you to apply and take action so you can have your best year. Ever. I will teach you how, even as an introvert, you can market your services without feeling ay and gross.

If you're truly ready to elevate your practice, this is your chance. Don't miss out on those two masterclasses. Click the link below, and learn to implement these strategies effectively without feeling overwhelmed.

Clara Cohen: And that's one of the thing that, again, I wasn't taught and I had to kind of learn as I went. And one of the thing that now in British Columbia and Vancouver, Canada, we are acupuncturists covered for any car accident. So we have only one insurance in the whole province, kinda like a state, right?

But in the whole province, we have one insurance provider. For the car accident or for your car, there's no competition. There's the one provider. And so that provider now. Gives 12 acupuncture session right after an accident, so it's paid for. Patients don't have to pay. It's automatic. You don't have to ask for it.

They just have to found a provider and go for 12 session after this first 12 initial session. If people choose to do it, some people may just do three session, whatever they want, but after those 12 session, we have to communicate with the car insurance provider. If the patient needs more session right, we're like, okay, they're doing really well, but you know, it was such a strong accident.

We have to explain what the progress was. We have to do a whole report and then tell them what we see, the next few weeks or the next few months, and what we're asking for, and then they're gonna look at this report and decide if they're gonna pay for it. Or not, right? Well, in that report we cannot say, oh, this person has blood stasis, because we're not allowed to say that to them.

'cause they won't understand what that mean. We have to talk in a biomedicine or biomedical way to them. And I feel like that's really important to teach that to practitioners so they know, like you just said, how to communicate with insurance providers, with other medical professionals that don't have the TCM background and don't know what Liver Yang Rising is.

They wouldn't even connect the dots. And I feel like people forget that it's the same of patients. You cannot say to a patient, oh, you have spleen qi deficiency. 'cause they think this physical spleen is in trouble. Or they think that if you'd say kidney qi deficiency, they think the physical kidney is deficient instead of seeing the whole picture from a CCM perspective.

So I always say to students, I said, you know, when you explain, always explain from. Root cause perspective from a whole integrative, don't say kidney qi deficiency. Just say: all the stress that you've had for years and the trauma from childhood is really depleting and now your cortisol is outta balance.

And now you extremely fatigue. And you explain this in every way that the patient can understand. So they trust your ability to help them. And then they can ask question and go, oh, why are you doing this point? Oh, this point is for this or for that. But you cannot say that to patients because in my opinion.

It means nothing to them. It doesn't mean anything, and then they think something else that is not true. So. In the university where you are a clinician, do you teach this in, let's say, when you see patients in group? So when I was in school, we had a clinic supervisor. We were in group and we asked question, and then, you know, the supervisor would help us divide a plan and et cetera.

But the supervisor would speak to the patient. We would not the first year and then years later, then we would speak to the patient.

And so I had to kind of step back and really communicate to my patient in a way that made it easy for them to grasp what was going on within their body. So I would love for you to take the floor on that.

Dr. Haley Parker: I tell my students and other practitioners if I'm coaching them or teaching them as colleagues. That we really have to be translators. Even originally, when we have this jargon in TCM, we understand the integrative aspect of the body. But to your point, other western medical providers may or may not be able to connect those dots. Certainly patients don't have that same familiarity with human anatomy and physiology, so we really have to teach them what are these things, meaning now we have to be very careful because we live in a very litigious society and we. Are under certain restraints of being able to say and diagnose with Western medical terms when we're a TCM provider.

So we have to stay in our lanes and that makes it another layer of difficulty for our students and our practitioners being able to describe what's going on,

however. We can talk in a way in which we're able to elaborate on, say, certain conditions or patterns and really getting the patient to participate in their health. And when we go through their review systems and we're able to see certain like blood deficiency signs that may or may not correlate with anemia, we're ultimately able to say perhaps this could correlate to anemia in Western medicine, or something along those lines. I tend to cover myself a bit by giving an asterisk and saying like, I, I couldn't be able to tell you this.

That's not part of my, licence. However, you can go to your primary care provider and have a blood test and have that diagnosed. But ultimately I bring it back to how we can help and say, but in the end, we really wanna get you better from the root cause, which you pointed out, as well as these symptoms and these conditions that are plaguing you.

Now, how to learn that art of juggling between all of these different languages is very tedious and getting the patient buy-in because oftentimes. I don't know about you, but oftentimes my patients come in and they're either using me as a last resort they're so, so, so suspect of needles having anything to do with health you really have to convince them and win them over and show that the proof is in the pudding and how they're gonna feel afterwards. That's really a performance. I would relate it to a performance of being able to be confident in yourself, being able to describe what's going on, being able to have bedside manner and give that patient comfort. Allow them to set the pace of the treatment while still explaining to them what's going on. Many a time, even myself, I've gotten myself into a rut using a word like qi or yang or something like that. And then I have to try to find very relatable relatable synonyms to help teach the patient. Well, what am I really talking about? And I'm not just speaking these poetic words that we learn in TCM School.

Right. It will happen to any practitioner who's listening to any student who's listening. It will happen. And yet this is where we can do our studying of being able, to, to practice, finding ways to communicate better to our patients and also our providers. The good news is the longer I've been in practice, the more I've seen that people recognize the power of integrative body medicine. have so much research out there on just yoga practice Ayurveda aromatherapy helping to meditate, breathe, and all of these things which are somatic experiences to bring the patient back to themselves and really find that homeostatic setpoint along with behavioral health and mental health being such a prominent topic ever since really COVID. Understanding that our bodies are trying to constantly seek homeostasis.

So if we can bring it back into more pop culture of what are we trying to achieve in our TCM and East Asian medical practices? The patient can kind of fill in those blanks without us having to really hold their hand through the whole process.

Clara Cohen: That's a really good point as well. So when we look at integrating, 'cause now that's communication with the patient and trying to basically explain the best so the patient is involved in their health and we can give them, like you said, somatic ways to help reduce the stress while we're doing what we can to help the patient.

Now the next step is looking at integration. So let's say, 'cause I know you guys do integration with oncology or cancer care, how do you go about this and how does a practitioner integrate acupuncture with someone going through chemotherapy, radiation, et cetera?

Dr. Haley Parker: That's a great question. So a lot of the time, any professional I have worked with when co-treating a patient is so enthusiastic that the patient's, one, willing to have acupuncture services. And two, an acupuncturist is excited about helping their treatment plan because I, as we spoke about before, every practitioner knows there are limitations to our scope.

And I think the best practitioners out there know when to refer out or know when they need a little assistance in helping achieve the treatment results that we're all after. So when it comes to patient care. A lot of the time, the oncologists look to me to help manage the symptoms of chemo and radiation and really strengthening that person from the inside out or the root causes, which is right in our alley.

That is exactly what we are trained for, is to help to support the organism, support the individual, and help manage symptoms from their treatment, whether they're choosing chemo, radiation, or another type of intervention, we're really ultimately supporting the individual. With that, we're able to communicate back and forth to the providers, but oftentimes if you prove that you are helping the patient, the provider trusts you, and they're ultimately referring and referring more and more patients to help you continue to support that patient, getting through the treatment plan. One thing that my oncology teacher taught me is that you always wanna catch those patients before symptoms arise. Once symptoms start to accumulate in the body, it's really difficult for the body, which is already getting broken down and accumulating more stress as well to have even more of a surge of energy to push out some of those symptoms and heal because all of that is taking some battery life.

Right? So if we can start with a patient. Prior to them starting their oncology treatments, we're able to help harness their energy, help them harness their power to get through the treatments, but also keep them supported through the treatments and they have much better treatment results.

There's tons of research out there. Really the more and more that we see our medicine being highlighted, it is in these allied type practices. And that's really encouraging for us to ultimately make a way and a path line in our future to work with other medical care to support the patient outcomes.

Clara Cohen: That's so important because. Again, we all wanna help the patient. That's number one. Every practitioner should want that, right? That that's the first thing. But when you look at cancer, one of the thing that I get, because I'm on social media and I'm online people will come and ask me very specific questions and a lot of practitioners have this idea, which is interesting.

So I would love for you to answer 'cause I always answer them, but they. They will come and say, oh, I can't do, you know stomach 36 on someone that's going through chemo, because that's gonna create some issue of the immune and the autoimmune defense. And I'm like, what are you talking about? So to me, that makes no sense to not wanna do, let's say, a certain point like stomach 36.

And another question that comes often is like, well, the patient is like. Really, really weak already. And they're older, let's say, and they're going through chemo. So, you know, is acupunctures gonna make the make it worse? So that's two questions that a lot of practitioners struggle with, I think, when it comes to oncology and treating with acupuncturist.

So I would love your opinion on that.

Dr. Haley Parker: I feel that in both of those cases, that is the perfect time for acupuncture. There are some very palatable points out there. Stomach 36 is one of the most researched points and has so many benefits. You know, we have to remember our dosage and our potency as a practitioner potentially on someone who's very, very weak.

Like the elderly patient going through chemo, we wouldn't do as strong of a treatment or as long of a duration. We perhaps would do a much more neutral technique on those points, but that stimulation is still going to support that patient so much. Also remembering that our skillset is in the adaptability of what we can do.

So if that patient has some sort of adverse, individualized, adverse reaction to a certain point, modify it. We have more than enough points that we can use in our repertoire of treatment prescription. Even if it's just something as simple as yin tang and a shen men to calm their spirit and help to support them as an individual, there's always something that can be done.

Really emphasize really, really good paperwork in case anything was ever to be called into question. But ultimately points like stomach 36 PC six, which is great for the nausea from chemo and radiation. You know, those are points that cancer research has gone above and beyond to show that most every single patient can use.

Remember our treatments also there's a very, adaptive way in which our medicine works with our patients. So if someone does have autoimmune conditions, that's why acupuncture is called for is because it brings the body outta that hyper arousal. If the body is having a low immune response, like chronically bombarded with viruses and bacteria acupuncture helps to bring their immune system back up and support that organism to fighting off those pathogens. So remember there again, our medicines designed to help support the body, which the body's given all of the things it needs to help itself.

We just are the, we are the mechanics that are gonna help tune that body to get through whatever situation, acute or chronic, as well as help to support that individual through their treatment process.

Clara Cohen: It's exactly it. It's like it's there to self-regulate. It's not gonna do something because you have autoimmune disorders. That's gonna make it worse. It's like, no, it's self-regulating. And again, like you said, it's like doing a gentle treatment if you think the patient is so weak or very elderly, right?

Like I'm always thinking if you're gonna be 84 and you're going through chemotherapy, I'm not gonna put a lot of needles. Maybe three. That's it. Like nothing more. And that'll be enough for the body to kind of grasp onto it. So we don't need to go well, I should put all those points in this one because this is great.

It's like, just be more gentle. Right? That's, that's pretty much how we go about it.

Dr. Haley Parker: All right and trust yourself as a practitioner and trust the medicine. The medicine's been around for thousands of years, right? There's also so many things that you're doing by just bringing your energy into that

treatment room. You're helping to support that person's. Shen, knowing that they're not every doctor's appointment is gonna have more bad news, right?

You're helping to create a sense of community, which is one of the pillars of healthy, holistic living. You're also able to give some lifestyle recommendations. Perhaps you can tell that patient, they may need to drink more water or have some congee, right? The rice soup of where you're just eating a little bit to keep something in your stomach and have you know. the side effects of some of that nausea. Also, don't forget the power of herbs. I would caution practitioners to really know what they're doing before they prescribe herbs. But herbs are another way in which you can really give a small dosage to help build that patient from the inside out if you're really reluctant to do certain needle prescriptions.

But there's so many tools in our toolbox as practitioners that we have to remember that even just our presence in helping supporting a patient is part of their integrative healthcare, the more we can do in our studies to become experts in our field and experts in our specialties, we're bringing more of that potency into the treatment room.

It doesn't necessarily have to be in a high number of needles for the treatment itself.

Clara Cohen: I absolutely love what you shared because one of the thing that I learned from Dr. Yvonne Farrell, who I learned a lot from over the years and took a lot of her teaching, she always said.

Your intention behind your treatment is more important than your point selection. And that stayed with me. And you just said that. You're like, what's your intention? What energy do you bring? Right? So your intention behind your needle to me, that it makes such a huge difference. So if you feel that this patient, even though this is the protocol that you use a lot on people with cancer, if you feel this patient couldn't take it, you're like, you know what?

I think this patient just needed, like you said Shen Men and Yin Tang. We're just gonna do that for this patient. Right? So I love that you share that because I think we forget that, you know, we follow protocol or, or books or whatever, and it's like, no follow what your gut is saying as well. That's really important to kind of have that energetic intention.

And I think your intention is so crucial to the outcome of the patient as well.

Dr. Haley Parker: That's so, so, so well put, because one of my teachers came from a very spiritual tradition and he made a very clear distinction with me when I was trying to get everything right in school. And he kind of had to calm me down a little bit. And he was like, Haley, remember it's not about getting it right. You need to connect with the patient and there is no right answer. The connect with the patient. And if you're really, truly in tune with that patient, you are helping to facilitate that patient. And there's no ego in your treatment of right or wrong. And I remember at first kind of being a little stunned by that, but like don't I get an A? Because, I mean here in school mode, but then as I became a practitioner, his words would just resonate so deeply because to your point, the difference between us as integrative practitioners and practitioners who are practicing the traditional east Asian medical practice, it is an individualized medicine.

Ad: Before we continue with today's episode, I wanna share something that honestly feels like a big moment for me if you've been following me for a while. You know, I've always said no to all sponsorships. I've been approached many times, but I turn them all down because if I don't genuinely use a product or love it, I will never recommend it to you.

But today is different. I am super excited to introduce my very first sponsor. Drum roll please. Jane app. I'm also a Jane Ambassador, so this is a company I actually use and love. I am saying yes because I've used Jane for years in my own multidisciplinary clinic. Truly, it's the best practice management software and electronic medical record.

I've ever worked with before, Jane, we were using a clunky system that made everything harder than it needed to be. When we switched the entire clinic, felt the difference immediately. Jane is built by people who actually understand what it's like to be a practitioner. Running a busy practice. One of my favorite features is online booking.

There is nothing better than waking up and seeing patients booking their own appointment. Well, I was asleep. Your patients can book when it works for them and the wait list feature. Fills last minute cancellations automatically. I love that. I used to spend so much time calling eight to 10 people just to fill up one spot.

Jane also automates the things we never enjoy doing, like intake forms, reminders, confirmation. It honestly feels like having an extra assistant handling all the moving parts. You can focus on what really matters, which is supporting your patients and being the TCM rockstar practitioner. You truly are.

There are so many features I could talk about, but we would be here all day if you are looking for a system that brings more ease, more clarity and comment to your practice. I truly. Recommend Jane. You can check it out at jane.app/demo. And because you're part of the Acupro community, you can use my code acupro one mo one month when you sign up to get a one month grace period on your new account.

The link and the code are also in the show notes below for you. Now let's get back to today's episode.

Clara Cohen: What else do you provide your student with knowledge of where else they can integrate the knowledge. I know we can integrate everywhere, but where do you place your students? So they get a lot of different kind of perspective.

Dr. Haley Parker: That's so cool. It's one of my favorite subjects to talk about. So with our externship programs, I have been lucky to step into this role of building these partnerships and taking students out into the field. So that they're gonna be working with a different kind of patient base than seen just in our university clinics. So with that, we've been able to partner with some really awesome local facilities, hospitals, and universities that are also on that same platform and trajectory of trying to build a better future and integrate medicine. So we work with Inova Life with Cancer which we were just speaking about the oncology program.

But this externship is really unique in the sense that we also open those doors to caretakers and family members who are providing support for an active oncology patient. And part of the reason we do this is because a lot of the time. The cancer patients are the ones that are always, oh, how are you?

What's going on? How are you feeling? Right? And they're going from treatment to treatment to treatment. But no one ever thinks about their person who's taking them to those treatments or the professionals who are sitting there holding their hand and working with that pain and the struggle and the unknowns that are gonna happen through their treatment process.

And that could be really, really. Draining, right? Like we have such high rates of practitioner burnout in all medical fields, but particularly in cancer care. So opening the doors to caretakers has been a wonderful experience. They have great testimonials and feedback to our students, and ultimately that's a way in which our organization can serve our community and really create that future of integrative healthcare. Another place that we've been working with is, MSK

Memorial Sloan Kettering up in New Jersey. That one is another oncology program. Giving the students and the patients the ability to work with one another in, a well-known environment like Memorial Sloan Kettering. We also have an externship with bread for the city. And so that's an inner city food bank and medical clinic that provides services for patients that may not have the means to be able to seek treatment or care. This is a population that is so rewarding to work with. They maybe have never thought to get acupuncture, let alone, never would've considered to put resources towards that. And the students are able to come and work on helping to support these patients for their better health. We have a really awesome externship started up here in the spring with Galludet University. It's the largest deaf plus community that we have here in the country. And so any student that goes to that university may have a hearing disability or immediate family member.

And the interesting part about this population is they often don't seek treatment or services because of the lack of translator resources, or they just don't know about it patient education because there hasn't been enough research done on the population due to some barriers to entry. So our school is looking to help to work with Galludet University, not only bringing the service to that community, but ultimately hoping to start generating some more research so that we can provide more services in the future or get more of a movement towards helping underserved populations that are in our local area, but hopefully nationally as well.

Clara Cohen: I love this. I wish I went to this university right now if I had to start all over again. I have to say, because when I was in school, we had no externship like a lot of schools. And so I went to look for places and volunteer at places in order to gain some experience and to be exposed to something different.

And so when you talked about helping the underprivileged community specifically, bread for the city.

When I was in school, I went and volunteered at Community Acupunctures that serve people that have addiction, specifically drug addiction.

So it exposed me to community acupuncture. It exposed me to a different demographic with different needs. That was fantastic. And then I did go and do an externship again, volunteered because, I had, contacted so many people and a lot of people said no. Right. Someone's gonna say yes eventually you know the number game.

And so I also went in a gynecology clinic and I was able to learn a lot when it comes to gynecology. So I love that you're providing this for your students because they can go and get such phenomenal experience and they can choose to do different ones and see what they gravitate towards. I think that's fantastic and that's something that's missing.

I think that'll prepare them better when they come out because they might be really gravitated towards something. And even if they're not, they know what the possibilities are. So that's something that I love. Now, when you place people, and obviously you have to do the work and ask can my student come can we collaborate into this?

Do the student do two weeks, it's a semester. Like how long do they go in there? And you know, is it once a week? Like how much do they get outta that?

Dr. Haley Parker: It's a 10 week quarter, so the student will apply because we tried to take students that really have a passion for this. or a curiosity if they think they may go on to specialize in certain population care in the future. We'll have them go through an application process once selected, they go through their onboarding paperwork process as well as any sort of like cultural competency debriefing to be able to better serve a community.

And then they'll show up. With a licensed supervisor such as myself, to site and be able to offer treatment in a community style treatment for the population. Another thing that you said that I too felt very passionate about with this is. Most students had to find their own way, especially in our time when we went to school. I was working with so many different doctors on weekends, on nights to try to just get as much information as I could because I really graduated school feeling like I understood book learning, but I didn't understand that practical application and that experiential knowledge.

You cannot relate, you can't compare. so if we can give our students these interactions, especially the ones that throw them off, get them on their toes, and maybe shake them up a little bit, know that that adversity is gonna allow them to be a much better secure practitioner in the future when they're out there in their own practice and perhaps one day be able to see the same exact case and say, you know what?

I've seen this before. The flag will kind of go off in their head and they'll say, ah, maybe I should refer this patient out. Or, oh, I remember this kind of interaction. I just need to help this patient understand I'm here to help them, calm them down and, and proceed from there. So it gives the, the student much

more of a bandwidth to be able to handle a lot more situations in the future. Some, some things, I don't think they realize how lucky they are compared to previous generations of schooling. But the idea is that the more people we can get involved with this type of growth and partnership, the more we can offer our students. Any practitioner who is out there who's looking to build something like this with a university. If you're nearby the UIM campus locations, give us a call and we'd love to start brainstorming with you or else look to your other acupuncture schools in the area because ultimately we need teachers. Remember, our profession was originally one of kind of like an apprenticeship, right? Where we passed down our knowledge orally from tradition to tradition. That still applies, and I think that our society has pulled us in so many directions. Talk about all those hats we wear, pulled us in so many directions that we forget that if we can build that infrastructure there in the school and help our students to go and create this, we can reach so many more populations.

And it's another passion project for us as practitioners as we get on into our years of practicing.

Clara Cohen: That's a good segue 'cause I have a question for you about teaching. I started teaching by accident after I graduated because the school asked me to come and teach a class. 'cause their teacher had to fly as an emergency three days before the semester was started in September.

And they had nobody else. And they literally called me and I'm like, I'm not a teacher. I don't know. No, no, no, no. And they're like, please, please. And I felt so bad for them, for the students that had nobody and what to do. And I was like, okay. And I remember coming that first day and I stood in front of. A class of over 36 students and I remember feeling so red, so uncomfortable going, those people are looking at me.

Do they not know that I'm not a teacher? And what was interesting is, like you said, the passion, you know, like what you love. And when I started talking about Chinese medicine, within 10 minutes you could have not shut me up. I was so excited. I was writing on the board, I was asking question to everybody, and next thing you know.

I came home and my husband's like, oh my gosh, what happened? Because I'm like screaming. This was so much fun. This was amazing. And I found a passion for teaching Chinese medicine that I had no idea would've come my way. And you know. Many, many, many years later. Now I teach online, I teach, you know, on YouTube, and I teach on social media, and I really continue to

educate the world and use my teaching passion, I would say, for this medicine.

So my last question for you would be, if a practitioner is so passionate. Like I am and would love to teach because you were talking about, you know, it's our next role is to teach. How would they go about teaching? Because I know for me, it fell on me and I could have said no, but I said yes, even though I was so uncomfortable and so scared.

But discovered a passion. So I would love your input on if anybody wants to teach, what should they do?

Dr. Haley Parker: That is so good. And you know what? I think most people do find it by accident or there's just this inside of us that we know we wanna give back more. And oftentimes when we take all of our years of experience, 'cause the trial and error, right? How much have I learned through my errors?

And students just enjoy hearing that. Not because they wanted to see me have a hard time, but they enjoy that because it's like I could've just saved 30 of them from going through the same ups and downs that I did. And ultimately it gives them a fulcrum to really lead with success to get in touch with your local university.

A lot of programs are online or at least a didactic program where some of the programs would be online. It's hard to teach a lot of those techniques classes online, as you can imagine. But there are several courses in theory or public policy that may be right in your wheelhouse. So at least for our institution, you would email.

You could email me your resume and maybe a cover letter of being interested in teaching. Ultimately, you would go through an interview process and by your resume we'd pick out courses that we need a teacher for as well as they're in your wheelhouse, and we'd have authority to teach. And there it is. are gonna start something new. You find things about yourself, though you didn't even know you had. And what's so cool is the more that I would teach my students, I would find, I would learn so much from my students. The way a student would ask a question, I would be like, I have never thought about it that way before.

Or the way that they would connect the dots between something that the lung would do and something that the liver would do. And I was like, wow. I have never heard it put that way before. And it ultimately made me feel so much

more engaged with the medicine, so much more of an. Authentic type practitioner that was able to take this theory and really embody this theory.

And it was very much a synergy amongst the students and the practitioner. And I felt more confident the more I started to teach. So I believe that anybody that has that passion for teaching just needs to start by reaching out, seeing what the availability is, and then from there you do, you're an expert. A lot of our students maybe had a past life as, say, an accountant, an architect, a mother maybe they had a career in food and hospitality, and they come into the TCM world or the traditional East Asian world and they're like, oh, I don't really know. I don't think I'm really an authentic practitioner. Your previous experience is going to come with you, and you are going to be the perfect ambassador to the perfect group of people. And I tell you what, we need all the help that we can get in our profession across our country, every single state. And the more practitioners that we have that are gleaning their experience and teaching that experience, the more we're gonna arm our future practitioners so we can ensure that our profession continue to grow and integrate as we go on.

Clara Cohen: Perfectly said. 'cause I have to say, for me personally, teaching has made me such a stronger practitioner. It, it changed everything because first of all, because you're teaching and the same thing, like I've taught, you know, foundation and diagnosis and acupuncture points, and so many times I don't need to look at anything.

I could just talk about it because now it's so much ingrained. So when people are like, how do you remember where all the points are in their function and the location? I'm like, I've taught it for over 14 years. So yeah, and usually two cohorts, so sometimes 28 times. So. Eventually it sticks, right? So being a teacher makes you such a better practitioner from the student's perspective.

Like you said, the questions they ask, but also from repetition of you going to teach over and over and over and then it's just sticks in your head. So that's the second thing. And you know, when it comes to. Being the best practitioner from a past life. I so agree with that because before I did TCMI was in the fitness industry for 15 years, and when I have patients that come with musculoskeletal issue, I can show them what kind of stretch exercise is great or not for where they are right now and what they're doing.

Because I've done this, I was personal training for 15 years, so that past life we have. It doesn't matter if it's not related to health. If you're an accountant before, well good on you. 'cause I know nothing about accounting and I have to hire someone. You don't have to do that. You can do it yourself.

It's fantastic. Right. So I love that you mentioned that. 'cause I think people think it's a detriment, but it's not. It's an asset that you have because you have more knowledge and you can connect to your patients better because you have this other knowledge. Right. So I think that's really good. Yeah.

Dr. Haley Parker: and remember, our medicine is so versatile. It's so versatile. And so when I have taught in the past the clinical communications courses or the practice management courses, a lot of that was like really getting the students to answer some of these questions for themselves of like, why did you get into this medicine and who like building a business plan? Who is your patient base? of the times they'd have to go really inward of like, well, why did you come into this medicine? Because chances are, why you're here on the earth and why you're here to seek help is ultimately how you're gonna help others. And all of that spiritual, you know, fractal that happens in, in what we do.

But it is, it's really true that we're here to inspire each other, support each other, and no person is an island. No one person has all the answers. But that's also another beautiful thing about working at a university is I have colleagues like Lixing Lao, who can one either validate me when I'm feeling like I'm completely off target or two, he can guide me in a way in which, well, this is how you do it to learn.

And so. Ultimately, even in that way, it's helping me to become a much more well-rounded practitioner, getting into the worlds of research, which, you know, if anyone who knows me knows I'm really not a detailed type person, but ultimately working in a way of, of trying to unite the field and, and grow even just maybe something bigger than I even thought I would be one day just going into acupuncture school as a student myself.

So the, the people we meet, we always are gonna leave an impression. Ultimately, the more that we help each other, the more we're helping ourselves, the more we're helping our patients. Those circles keep moving out further and further into the community, and we never know what we can build together.

Clara Cohen: That's a beautiful way to end the conversation. Support each other. We're here for each other. We're here to service people to really give the best at our knowledge, but we need support 'cause we're not an island. So thank you so much Dr. Haley. I really appreciate all your knowledge, your wisdom, and everything you shared with us.

We'll have the link to reach out to you and the university below in the show notes for everyone to check it out as well. One last word before you go. The floor is yours.

Dr. Haley Parker: Thank you so much for having me today. We look forward to working with anyone who is in our area. We have a campus here in Northern Virginia, as well as New Jersey and Georgia. But also please take a look at our vuimclinic.com and vuim.edu. We do have a doctoral program for those practitioners looking for that next step in their education, but also you can find more about our university if we're the home for you to start your teaching career. And one last thing, which I've mentioned it before at the beginning of the show is. Get in touch with your state advocacy organization and if you're not going to participate, at least help them support their lobbying efforts to protect our field and help keep a voice for our profession as we continue to integrate our medical system here in this country.

Because acupuncture is so awesome, it's so powerful, and it really does integrate so well. And we need more and more practitioners out there to help that effort. Teaching about it as ambassadors, but also showing the powers of our medicine.

Clara Cohen: Beautiful. Thank you so much.

Thank you so much for spending your time with me today. I truly hope you benefited from this episode, and I would love for you to share it with a friend that may benefit from it as well. Follow the show, live a review, and if you want more. Go to my website, acuproacademy.com. I have tons of resources there with treatment protocols, case studies, free courses, and so much more.

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