

ONESPACE ACUPUNCTURE

How did you become interested in multibed practice?

We read an article about the Dragon Project in the CICM newsletter and then went on to read "The Remedy" by Lisa Roeleder who had set up a multi bed clinic in Oregon (US). We were already meeting regularly to discuss clinical issues and were very drawn to the idea of setting up a multi bed clinic ourselves. The idea of working in partnership, offering an alternative to expensive private treatments appealed to us and we went from there. We work in a culturally diverse area in East London and the thought of being able to offer affordable acupuncture to a wider section of the population who might otherwise never come through our door really motivated us too.

How did you find the process of setting up your clinic? Were there any areas you felt were particularly challenging, or others that worked really well?

Initially we started looking for local premises that would be suitable and affordable, which proved to be quite difficult. It needed to conform to health and safety standards, be easily accessible and affordable for us, as we did not really have any money. We then looked at the most obvious place; the health centre (Bodywise) where we both have our private practice. There was space available, a number of treatment couches lying around in the storage cupboard and private rooms for initial consultations. It was very straightforward then. Our initial set up costs were minimal. We used space that otherwise stood empty during the day, bringing in new people for Bodywise at the same time, so we struck a deal that has proven to work well for both parties.

You've been in business for a few years now, and your clinic is a great success. What do you think you've done well and what was your steepest learning curve?

We opened One Space Acupuncture in January 2008 and we were busy pretty much from day one. It became clear after the first few months that we were undercharging, and too many patients were switching from our private practices to One Space. We modified our pricing structure and now operate a sliding scale within set parameters, depending on how much each person feels they can afford. One of the most important things about our clinic is that we work very well together as a team and the atmosphere is very pleasant and relaxed. People comment on that often. It makes them come back and tell their friends.

No doubt you've noticed that we're in the middle of a bit of an economic contraction. How has that affected your patients and do you think it is affecting your practice, either in positive or negative ways?

We have overall been a bit quieter, as in our private practice. Some private patients have switched to the One Space clinic. It has not been a problem so far.

What sort of people visit your clinic? Do you have any idea of the proportion of your patients who are new to acupuncture?

We do see a lot of people who are new to acupuncture and who are on a low income or students, although we are not reaching the poorest members of the community. Bodywise applied for funding, part of which would have enabled us to provide heavily subsidised treatments to the very poorest. Unfortunately the funding bid was unsuccessful, but actively targeting specific groups within the community is something we want to do more of. We sent out flyers to local community groups, GP and dental practices, which has brought people in. However, most people come through word of mouth and through our website or through Bodywise.

What tips would you give to other practitioners who are interested in setting up a new multibed clinic?

In our experience it was useful to have some years of practice under our belt, as initially it was very demanding to think on our feet and not have time to sit and pore over cases as we were seeing 32 people a day between the two of us. We have the capacity to see 6 patients an hour between us. Besides that we offer drop in ear acupuncture. Important tip: plan in a decent break for lunch!

Are there any other stories, ideas or opinions you would like to share?

One of our concerns when we first set up was how patients would find having less time to talk with us, and whether this would affect treatment outcomes. We decided to gather information via MYMOP, but it quickly became apparent that treatment was just as effective as in a one to one setting, and we discontinued the MYMOP as it was time consuming. After the first year we conducted a survey amongst our patients to get some feedback that might be useful for us. The response was very positive, and a number of people reported that, contrary to their expectations, they enjoyed having acupuncture with other people being treated around them. They liked the atmosphere, the music and being tucked up in a blanket. One recurring complaint was the fact that the floor creaked, disturbing their slumber as we went about our business, but unfortunately there was nothing we could do about that. They also thought the waiting area was tatty, and we were able to act on their feedback to make it feel more welcoming at minimal cost. Last but not least, the overwhelming majority reported improved symptoms and general wellbeing.