

Welcome to Our Community!

Please take a minute to read this introduction to our clinic and to our community. We are delighted that you are interested in joining us!

What is different about THE GATHERING POINT COMMUNITY ACUPUNCTURE clinic?

We treat in a community setting.

Most US acupuncturists treat patients on tables in individual cubicles. This is not traditional in Asia, where acupuncture usually occurs in a community setting. Treating patients in a community setting has many benefits: it's easy for friends and family members to come in for treatment together; many patients find it comforting; and a collective energetic field becomes established which actually makes individual treatments more powerful. In some styles of acupuncture, the needles are removed after only a few minutes or after a half hour at most. The style of acupuncture we practice allows patients to keep their needles in as long as they want, and the "right" amount of time varies from patient to patient. Most people learn after a few treatments when they feel "done"; this can take from twenty minutes to a couple of hours! Many people fall asleep, and wake feeling refreshed.

We have a sliding scale.

Most US acupuncturists also see only one patient per hour and charge \$65 to \$175 per treatment. They tend to spend a long time talking with each patient, going over medical records, asking many questions. We don't. The only way that we can make acupuncture affordable and still make a living ourselves is to streamline our treatments and see multiple patients in an hour, so we have returned to the traditional approach; instead of asking you lots of questions, we rely on tongue and pulse diagnosis to decide how to treat you. This is exactly how acupuncture is practiced traditionally in Asia — many patients per hour and very little talking.

Because we have a sliding scale, we cannot do insurance billing (that's the insurance companies' rule). If you have insurance that covers acupuncture, we'll be happy to give you a payment receipt, and you can submit it; that's OK with the insurance companies.

Our Commitment to You

We want to make it possible for you to receive acupuncture regularly enough and long enough to get better and stay better. We want our community to be welcoming to all different kinds of people. We want to give you the tools to take care of your own health so that you will not need to rely on corporations like Big Insurance or Big Pharmaceuticals for costly, high-tech interventions. We will provide a safe environment with skilled practitioners.

What We Need From You

◆ Responsibility

We do not provide primary care medicine! Acupuncture is a wonderful complement to Western medicine, but it is not a substitute for it. If you think you have a problem that is not "garden variety" (meaning, you are worried that you might have a serious infection, a malignant growth, or an injury that won't heal), or if you want someone knowledgeable to go over the details of your medical history with you, you need to see a primary care physician (ND, MD, or DO). We can provide some excellent, affordable referrals, even if you have no insurance coverage. But you cannot expect us to diagnose and treat something really serious. We *can* provide complimentary care for conditions

which require a physician's attention — for instance, we often treat patients for the side effects of chemotherapy. But we need you to take responsibility for your own health.

We do not receive grants, state or federal money, or insurance reimbursement. We exist because patients pay for their treatments — it's a sustainable community business model.

◆ **Flexibility**

The community setting requires some flexibility from you. We have a few patients who snore. Other patients who dislike snoring bring earplugs to their treatments. We are grateful for this! Some of our patients even bring favorite pillows or blankets from home with them, because they prefer theirs to ours. That's fine with us. Basically, we need you to participate in making yourself comfortable in the community room before we arrive to treat you.

In terms of how long you want to stay — tell the acupuncturist if you need to be somewhere at a certain time! We'll make sure you're out on time. In general, if you feel done, open your eyes and give us a meaningful look — if your eyes are closed, we think you're asleep and we won't wake you up.

◆ **Community-Mindedness**

The soothing atmosphere in our clinic exists because all of our patients create it by relaxing together. We appreciate everyone's presence! This kind of collective stillness is a rare and precious thing in our rushed and busy society. Maintaining this reservoir of calm requires that no one talk very much in the clinic space. If you would like to speak to a practitioner one-on-one at any length, please let us know.

Part of our success is that our patients learn the "routine" and take on a lot of responsibility for the appointments. Re-scheduling and making payment happens at the front desk BEFORE each treatment, so you can relax and enjoy treatment. Please take all personal belongings, (bags, shoes, etc.) with you back into the treatment room. And of course, please turn off your cell phone.

◆ **Commitment**

Acupuncture is a PROCESS. It is very rare for any acupuncturist to be able to resolve a problem with one treatment. In China, a typical treatment protocol for a chronic condition could be acupuncture every other day for three months! Most of our patients don't need that much acupuncture, but virtually every patient requires a course of treatment, rather than a single treatment, in order to get what they want from acupuncture.

One big reason that we are able to keep our prices so low is because of the extraordinary amount of marketing our patients do on our behalf — we don't have to advertise. We cannot express how grateful we are for this. Our patients are such effective marketers because they have first-hand experience of how well acupuncture works. All of our satisfied patients basically made a commitment to a course of treatment.

On your first visit, your acupuncturist will suggest a course of treatment, which can be anything from "we'd like to see you once a week for six weeks" to "we'd really like to see you every day for the next four days". This suggestion is based on our experience with treating different kinds of conditions. If you don't come in often enough or long enough, acupuncture probably won't work for you. The purpose of our sliding scale is to help you make that commitment. If you have questions about how long it will take to see results, please ask us, or if you think you need to adjust your treatment plan, please let us know. We need you to commit to the process of treatment in order to get good results.

And, last, but not least... enjoy the space.

The Gathering Point Community Acupuncture