

Inclusion in the Workplace: Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

The following article is part of the *Inclusion in the Workplace* series, sponsored by the UPMC Center for Inclusion and the Employee Partnership Council.

As we celebrate Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May, we take a moment to appreciate the amazing array of cultures that are honored during this month. This includes all nations of Asia — not only the large countries of Japan and China — but also Taiwan, India, and Pakistan; the nations of the Middle East and Central Asia; North and South Korea; Vietnam; Thailand; Cambodia; and Laos. This month also honors the people of the Pacific islands of Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia, and the Philippines.

These cultures have immeasurably enriched our own. They've also enriched the field of medicine — many treatments that were created thousands of years ago in Asia are still in use today, and as the Asian and Pacific Islander population has increased over the years, so too has the number of patients requesting these traditional therapies. At the Center for Integrative Medicine at UPMC Shadyside, the first hospital-based center in Pittsburgh to combine natural healing practices with conventional medicine, all patients can take advantage of these venerable treatments.

Acupuncture, which was developed 2,500 years ago in China, is one such treatment the center offers. In early China, practitioners used sharpened stones called *bian shi* to stimulate acupuncture points and to improve the flow of the patient's life force, or *qi* (pronounced "chee"). Scientific studies have not found any physiological evidence that *qi* exists, but there is promising research that supports the idea that acupuncture can help those suffering from certain conditions, such as lower back pain, arthritis, asthma, and nausea. At the center, very fine needles are used in acupuncture; the needles cause only a mild pinching sensation, and may be stimulated with electricity or heat to promote healing.

The center also is involved in ongoing research to prove the benefits of various massage therapies. Reflexology is a 5,000-year-old Chinese practice, wherein the soles of the feet are given a soothing massage with the belief that different pressure points on the foot correspond to different organs in the body. Shiatsu originated in Japan in the 1920s, and is translated as "finger pressure." As with acupuncture, shiatsu stimulates points on the body using pressure from the practitioner's fingers and palms.

Yoga originated in India more than 4,000 years ago, and its popularity is booming in the United States. Using a combination of postures, known as "asanas", breathing exercises, and meditative techniques, yoga promotes overall health and well-being. Yoga helps to develop strength and flexibility, improve agility and posture, and can serve as an energy booster. Yoga also may give you a sense of well-being, assist in the regulation of blood pressure, and improve cardiovascular health. The deep relaxation it promotes also can reduce stress and improve concentration. The center offers yoga classes, and by participating, UPMC employees can earn Take a Healthy Step points.

As time moves forward, more ancient Asian and Pacific Islander healing techniques may be examined and embraced by Americans of all cultural backgrounds. This gives us even more reason to honor the outstanding contributions that Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders have made to medicine in our country.

Lend a Hand

Immigrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands began arriving in America in the 1800s, and each year thousands more Asian and Pacific Islander people arrive, hoping to start a better life. This can be a difficult transition.

Imagine moving to a country on the other side of the world because you had to flee your homeland. Suddenly you find yourself in a place where you don't speak the language, and few people can speak yours. This can be a frightening and lonely time.

But refugees who arrive in Pittsburgh have Jewish Family & Children's Services to help them. During the month of May, UPMC employees have a special opportunity to help refugees start their new lives here. Support the "Make a House a Home" donation drive, which is a perfect example of Dignity & Respect Tip 29: Lend a Hand. Every year, Jewish Family & Children's Services helps approximately 225 refugees resettle here, and you can help these new Pittsburghers by donating items, such as toiletries, cleaning supplies, and other everyday items, which are necessary to turn a house into a safe, nurturing home.

You also can donate your time — volunteers are needed to tutor new arrivals in English, pick up families at the airport, and help them adjust to their new home. You can help make the transition easier for our new neighbors when you Lend a Hand.

To find out how to volunteer or to make a donation, visit the Jewish Family & Children's Services website at JFCSPgh.org.