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## **Another trip for Eleanor to the USA.**

In October 2006 I traveled to the third annual Society of Integrative Oncology (SIO) conference in Boston. This medical body continues to explore ways that Complementary and Alternative Therapies (CAM) can support cancer management.

Yes, I am getting to travel to 'the States' however there is little time to view the sights when there is work to be done!

Actually, I got a very persistent tummy bug from my granddaughter in Seattle just prior to traveling to Boston, so the hotel room was all I saw besides the conference room. Ho hum, nothing wrong was happening!

I did present a poster to the conference delegates about our work at Quest for Life and there was lively interest in what we do.

There are several institutes in America offering complementary and alternative therapy for folk with cancer in hospitals and cancer centres.

Our model of a community based charity is of great interest as it works with people diagnosed with cancer outside the hospital and supports the work of both the medical and CAM communities.

I took great delight in explaining the 4C's as well as describing our program activities. We talked about nothing being set in stone at Quest. That we do our best to give each group of participants the kind of program they are seeking, tailoring each program to the specific needs of the group while holding onto the integrity of the program. This concept alone was challenging for our American colleagues and several wanted to come and see for themselves just how we achieve this...time will tell!

Professionally I found the Massage Satellite (workshop) very exciting. Nine speakers from the medical massage community gave a 'how to do' lecture.

The SIO community does not debate the value of massage for people with cancer, just how best to deliver and fund the service.

Canadian, Lyse Lussier, started massaging children with cancer in **one** provincial hospital in Québec twenty years ago and now massage for children with cancer is offered in **every** hospital in the province by salaried and registered massage therapists.



Wendy Miner runs the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Centre (MSKCC) massage department in New York which consists of twelve therapists, six permanent part-time and six casual part-time. This team offers inpatient and outpatient services to every patient diagnosed with cancer as well as reduced cost massage to staff. All massage staff at MSKCC are salaried, insured and have superannuation.

Gayle MacDonald wrote *Medicine Hands* eight years ago (the first text book devoted to massage and cancer) and continues to work as the coordinator of 5-10 volunteers at a University Hospital. Gayle is the undisputed leader in this field and all nine massage professionals speaking at the conference deferred to her and held her in high esteem. Her advice is that if you start as a volunteer you will have great difficulty attaining salaried professional positions. Unlike MSKCC, and despite her leadership in this field, Gayle continues to seek salaried, professional recognition for her work.

This article is just a glimpse of the information I gathered at the SIO conference and new information continues to pour in.

As a new member of the Oncology Group at the NSW Cancer Institute (thanks to Petrea for putting my name forward), a committee looking at CAM in NSW, I am hoping that the one hundred plus students of *Massage Cancer and More* are honing their skills in readiness.

Maybe, just maybe, medical massage is on the radar?

Until our next Connection, Hugs Eleanor