

## **Reflections on the IASI Symposium 2010**

**by Anita Boser**

What do Seattle, Boston, Malta and Denver have in common? They have all been the scene for structural integrators from around the world, with different educational backgrounds to converge, grow and explore the wider SI world. The May 2010 IASI Symposium in Denver continued the tradition of supporting the SI profession by offering the opportunity to members of the SI community to connect with old friends and new, to continue the important cross-pollination between SI schools, and to learn from and absorb the wisdom of a wide variety of seasoned SI teachers.

The refined and full presence of the many speakers and workshop presenters was impressive and moving. The keynote speaker, Michael Salveson gave a memorable presentation, "Creating a Powerful Structural Integration Practice." Michael distilled his 40 year SI experience into two hours of riveting discussion of "How to identify the essential and respect the unknown." He tracked his experience of using the Recipe and learning how different bodies require different approaches. Lightning did not strike when he said, "Not everyone needs a perfectly level pelvis." He emphasized that having a range and combination of touch is important as practitioners. A deep, directed touch is needed to add input to the system and release fibrosis. However, a light, listening touch is just as important to soothe the nervous system, hypnotize the tissue, and really feel. An effective practitioner can work throughout the range of touch and know when to use what.

Serge Gracovetsky presented, "Clinical Diagnosis of Low Back Pain – Is there Value?" which left many with conflicting thoughts. He shared that studies demonstrate that a practitioner's connection to their clients' subjective experience frequently results in incorrect diagnosis or treatment. While some left the room with a general feeling of uncertainty, many recognized the full value in the SI approach. While we may be cognizant of our client's experience of pain, this is not our primary measure. Following a protocol that is not diagnosis or pain dependent with the goal to restore functional movement, practitioners are quite effective at helping people with back pain - a side effect of helping clients become more functional in the gravitational field.

We went high tech as Robert Schliep joined us from Europe via Skype with the "Latest News from the Fascia Laboratory", recapping research findings unveiled at the Fascial Research Congress in Amsterdam. He reported that the role of fascia is recognized in many studies now. For example, when proprioception is almost nil, the client will experience light touch as torture. Since most proprioception develops within the superficial fascial layer which contains many neurovascular fibers, our work to free the superficial layer improves information exchange in the body and decreases overexcited pain messages.

Here's an interesting fact: water can exist in a fourth state, not solid, liquid or gas, but liquid crystal. The water in healthy connective tissue between fibers exists in this liquid crystal state giving the tissue strength and flexibility. As we age, free radicals get between the fibers and liquid crystal, breaking down the structure.

Symposium participants also had the choice of 15 presenters in three breakout sessions as well as a fabulous dinner and dance. Dancing with SI practitioners is one of the best things in this author's life!

Finally, there were two more, great keynote speakers.

Monica Caspari brought us together with her ideas in "One World, One Work, Many Cultures," taking on the daunting task of discussing how to create cohesion while preserving diversity. This subject is just as pertinent to our industry and each client we see as it is to the world. We are embodied in our culture. This process starts in our mother's womb as we experience the rhythms of her body motion. Our embodiment determines how we perceive the world; it shapes our awareness and possibilities. The changes we create through structural integration create expanded awareness and perception for our clients.

Monica led an insightful exercise to demonstrate how our awareness and experience are interrelated. One partner held an arm out in line with their shoulder and the other partner pressed down on it. When the first partner's awareness was focused on their hand, it was easy for the second partner to press it down. But, when awareness was focused broader, such as on the wall in front of us, then we were more able to hold our arm against pressure.

Finally, our closing speaker, Rosemary Feitus, talked about the "Wisdom of Uncertainty." In her wisdom, she reminded us that we don't need another tool; we need to know how to use the tools we have. She encouraged us to resist tensing when we're unsure of what to do in a session, but instead to learn how to rest in the uncertainty.

She shared stories about Dr. Rolf including one about how Dr. Rolf, when working on her first client, asked "Is the tissue better in this direction or that?" Rosemary reminded us that not knowing didn't make the work any less powerful. What we don't understand about the body is as important as what we do.

Rosemary gave some tips on dealing with uncertainty;

**Matching** - Move at the same pace as your client. Duplicate their gestures. Copy their energy. What information comes forth?

**Pattern recognition** - Observe what's not in sync. Ask about past injuries in that area, and look for age related to the pattern. If there's residual shock in an area ask, "What happened here?"

**Open focus**- With a question in mind, keep an open focus when observing. Soften your gaze.

Being in a room of hundreds of SI practitioners has a unique resonance – and in a way, all SI practitioners from around the world were there in spirit. This convergence of SI practitioners is an important step in growing the profession. While we can summarize the event, you'll have to imagine the camaraderie and inspiration that happens with such a large gathering of diverse, yet like minded individuals. A video created by Scott Gauthier who asked practitioners at the Symposium to describe Structural Integration provides a sampling. It's posted on the [Fascial Connections blog](#) created for Structural Integrators.