

## NAHA 2006 Conference Review

by Jennifer Jefferies



The phrase 'quality over quantity' perfectly describes my first NAHA event. After having heard so much about NAHA for so many years it was such a blast to finally be there. The efforts of the volunteers who poured so much energy into making it happen are to be commended. As with any event of this kind, there were a few challenges, but Michelle, Kelly and the team managed them with absolute professionalism.

Two weeks before the event, security around the world was tightened even more with flights all over the UK and US interrupted following threats of liquid explosives. I must admit, being frisked before boarding a plane in LA was an interesting experience, and travelling at this time certainly came with a few more concerns than the usual travel nerves, but thankfully all went well and the NAHA experience was incredibly rewarding.

With the conference being held over the weekend of September 11, the committee held a meditation session as a *Stand for Healing and Peace*, which helped to set the mood.

Michael Scholes opened the conference on day one with an overview of the past 20 years in aromatherapy, showing just how much the world of aromatherapy has grown and changed over the years.

Mindy Green led us through a detailed overview of aromatherapy and skin care, and shared an excellent resource list which she has given us permission to publish in this edition of the journal ([page X](#)).

The after dinner timeslot can be a real challenge for any speaker, but Michael Alexander tackled *The Pharmacological Basics of Aromatherapeutics* purposefully, giving an in-depth account of what really is in aromatherapy.

Tim Blakely wrapped up the evening with a light-hearted slideshow of his world travels and dispelled some of the myths surrounding the sourcing, conservation and quality of essential oils.

On day two I enjoyed the opportunity of giving my *Triangle of Health* presentation, and was followed by Dr Jane Buckle giving us the basics of how we can conduct successful research projects in our own environments. Research gets a lot of attention these days and I see so many practitioners who think it is too complex for them, but Jane made it seem easier and more practical than I think a lot of us expected it to be.

Dr Vivian Lunny addressed the topic of Psycho-Aromatherapy and shared her experiences in using other modes of vibrational healing. She was followed by Farida Irani who began the journey for many of Ayurveda Aromatherapy, looking at body types, constitution, principles and philosophy. Farida led a workshop on the weekend for those who wanted to learn more.

Sylla Sheppard-Hanger addressed the issue of safety in a most passionate way, which led to a lively question and answer session with the panel addressing all manner of questions about, as I saw it, where we really are and where aromatherapy can go.

The evening was wrapped up with a celebration of fun and frivolity led by Michael Scholes again taking us down the path of the history of aromatherapy and aromatherapists in the US. The silent auction became a scrambling match at the end with everyone looking to secure a prize (myself included!). I hadn't been part of a silent auction before (here in Oz we seem to prefer your straightforward raffles for raising money), but it was serious fun, raising money for the association as well as the profile of the products donated by the sponsors.

The two-day conference was supported by a two-day trade show and a series of workshops with some 20-plus sessions to choose from, so no one could say that a particular topic wasn't covered!

The entire event was a success and a lot of fun networking with like-minded people. I find that attending conferences is not just about what happens on the stage, but also about what happens in the time wrapped around the event where networks can be established and nurtured helping us all to realise that we are in this industry together and the more we help to build the industry, the more there will be for everyone.

Making the commitment to attend a four-day event in any country is huge, especially when you also factor in the costs of travelling around the world and of being away from your own business. For me though, the payoff is in knowing that we are taking more and more steps toward truly integrating aromatherapy into all areas of the community.

An interesting common theme that came through all speakers was that they see the future of aromatherapy going beyond what we have been traditionally taught and moving toward emotional healing that addresses what is behind many of the physical ailments of today. For me this is encouraging as this is my view as well.

To all of the team that contributed to making NAHA happen, and to all those who attended, well done. I look forward to making the trip over your way again soon.

Conference proceedings will be available through the NAHA website [www.naha.org](http://www.naha.org)

Jennifer Jefferies is the Editor of Aromatherapy Today. This review appeared in Issue 37.