

THE 2003 APP CONFERENCE IN REVIEW

The annual APP Conference and Vendor Expo took place from June 1–5, at the Riviera Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. Hundreds of piercers were present for the many exciting events, informative classes, jewelry-packed Vendor Expo and more.

This year started off with kitsch fun and many laughs at the Opening Party. For the first time ever, we held a Costume Karaoke party, conveniently within the hotel. The catered food was plentiful, and many festive, sexy, and interesting costumes were on display. Some of the Karaoke singing was pretty creative, but other participants demonstrated genuine vocal talent. A few of the piercers can actually sing! A good time was had by all, and the vibe was friendly and positive. Piercers seemed to be very happy to socialize with one another as new friends were made, and old contacts were reunited.

Registration started bright and early on Monday with expert assistance from Las Vegas Registration Services, Inc. which helped the process to run more smoothly than ever.

Many thanks to each of the five Al D scholarship recipients who volunteered at this year's conference. They were so dedicated and helpful to all the Board members and worked extremely hard to assist in every way they could. Good job!

Monday morning began with an Orientation Meeting for newcomers, and a Member's Meeting for the APP Members in attendance. This was followed by classes in Employee Management, and Legislation, as well as a Round Table Discussion on Ethics.

Unlike the traditional class structure with a lecturing instructor, the Round Tables have a more open format in



Belly dancers entertaining attendees at the banquet. Photo: Mike Reynolds

which there is a facilitator to keep the discussion on track, but the floor is open for participation. Attendees are encouraged to share their ideas, experiences, and perspectives, as well as their questions and concerns.

After a lunch break we returned for a course in Customer Service and Marketing. Concurrent with this was Fakir's popular course on Anthropology. This was extremely well attended and one gal was overheard to say that she actually got teary-eyed during the presentation! Thanks to Fakir and his wife, Carla, for coming out to join us in Las

Vegas for this class.

The day was finished out by a class in Jewelry Size and Style, and one on Liability and Taxation. There was also a Round Table Discussion on In-house Bloodborne Pathogens Training.

The Vendor Expo opened Monday afternoon with about 65 vendors occupying a total of 80 booths in the Expo. It was held in an enormous ballroom adjacent to the registration lobby and classrooms, and there were also "sky-boxes" for vendors on the second floor. These roomy areas overlooked the Expo floor and some

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Since 1999 the APP President has presented an annual President's Award to individuals in the piercing community whose accomplishments have impacted the APP, or the field of professional piercing, in a positive way. Because these awards are presented during Conference it is likely that non-attendees will be unaware of these individuals and their contributions. In an effort to better inform the community at large I've compiled the following list.

I was the first recipient of the award, I've asked Elayne Angel, the Outreach Coordinator during that time, to write my section.

1999

Recipient: Bethra Szumski

Presented by: Gadhi Elias

Bethra Szumski has been piercing since 1996, and she became an APP member in 1997. She is Owner and Piercer at Virtue & Vice Body Piercing in Atlanta, and Athens, Georgia. She was nominated for the position of APP Secretary in late 1998, and elected in early 1999. She served an extremely effective three-year term as Secretary. Bethra was responsible for taking over all of the written and printed records on hand for the APP. She single handedly compiled them into an organized format, and devised new measures for accurate record keeping for the APP. She streamlined and professionalized the procedures and policies for processing membership applications, and developed many new and updated methods for upkeep of the secretarial duties. Prior to Conference registration being turned over to the professional service we now employ, Bethra and her capable, hard-working staff personally did ALL of the Conference registration work. And that is a job and a half! Bethra organized necessary elections to fill vacant board positions and provided invaluable assistance to facilitate cohesive board functioning. She has been instrumental in inspiring and supporting others to join in volunteering for the APP.



All in all, Bethra has poured heart and soul into the APP. Her efforts have resulted in tremendous success in furthering the goals of the organization.

2000

Recipient: Barry Blanchard

Presented by: Pat McCarthy

A machinist and California native, Barry began making body jewelry in 1991, at the urging of his friend James McDermott, a tattooist in the area. Four of James's Santa Cruz co-workers went on to found jewelry companies of their own. Barry's jewelry company, Anatometal, started as a small venture with the focus on quality and has evolved with the same principle to employ 70 individuals. Barry shares the credit for the current health of his company with his highly dedicated management team.



Barry initially became involved with the APP due to concerns about proposed California legislation; these regulations were the catalyst for the inception of the APP. He began attending meetings held in San Francisco by the then-fledgling Association. From the beginning he has freely shared information regarding jewelry production and materials. He has served as a panel organizer and participant, providing education regarding body jewelry during several APP Conferences. His support of the APP has been unwavering. Over

THE POINT

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APP Board Members

- President Bethra Szumski
- Vice President Jason King
- Secretary Crystal Sims
- Treasurer Paul King
- Outreach Coordinator Megg Mass
- International Liaison Alicia Cardenas
- Medical Coordinator Elayne Angel

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The APP extends our deepest appreciation to Francesco Cervi, of Italy, for his recent donation of the internet domain www.bodypiercing.org . This property is sure to increase exposure for the APP website.
Thank you Francesco!

the years he has been instrumental in organizing manufacturers in support of the Association and has generously donated internet bandwidth for APP use. In addition, he has supported the APP by many other generous donations, and by maintaining Corporate Membership. He has attended personally or been represented at every APP event to date.

2001

Recipient: Sky Renfro

Presented by: Pat McCarthy

Sky Renfro has worked as a piercer, managed professional piercing studios, and was a former Seminar Director of Gauntlet, Incorporated. Sky is now the owner of Professional Piercing Information Systems (PPIS), Compliance Solutions International, and a partner in Body Art Documentation Services. Each of these is dedicated to the education and training of body art practitioners and those in related fields. Sky is a Registered Central Supply Technician, and Instructor for National Safety Council courses, an OSHA authorized Community Outreach Trainer, and an American Red Cross instructor for a variety of health and safety courses. Sky is currently the President of CAPSBA (California Alliance for the Promotion of Safe Body Art) and is presently developing curriculum that will be used in the training of health inspectors and body art practitioners for the state of California.

Sky has been a member of the APP since its inception. His pro bono work as a Paralegal on behalf of the APP resulted in the Association's current non-profit status. He has donated countless hours in assistance writing the APP Procedure Manual and has been an educator at a majority of APP educational conferences to date. His insight and feedback have played a vital role in the history and development of the APP.



2002

Recipient: David Vidra

Presented by: Pat McCarthy

David A. Vidra, CLPN, MA, is an authorized OSHA Outreach Instructor for General Industry, American Heart Association, FACT Instructor, and Instructor for National Safety Council, First Aid, BBP and CPR training. He is the founder of Body Work Productions, Inc. in Cleveland, Ohio. David is also the head of Health Educators, Inc., the first educational company to offer course work in OSHA, BBP and infection control, as well as a multitude of other courses designed for the body modification



industries. He has participated in legislative efforts to set standards in the piercing and tattooing communities both nationally and internationally. David maintains membership to the APP, and his company, Health Educators, holds corporate membership. His focus at this time is to help set legislative standards for the education of piercers, tattooists and other body modification practitioners. He also sits on the board of SPCP as the Health and Safety director.

David is a former Board Member of the APP and his name appears on the Association's Articles of Incorporation. David was one of the first Board Members of the APP to serve a full term of office. As an initial director of the APP, David was instrumental in forming many of the infection control guidelines and directives necessary to establish the APP as a credible health and safety association. He is still a regular speaker and instructor at the APP annual conference.

2003

Recipient: Elizabeth "Betsy" Reynolds

Presented by: Bethra Szumski

Having received a Master of Science Degree in Oral Biology from the University of Washington, Betsy has reinforced her love of the microbiological aspects of periodontal therapy by maintaining teaching positions emphasizing the dental sciences at numerous dental hygiene schools. As a practicing hygienist for over twenty years, she has been involved with several private practices stressing comprehensive periodontal care for patients seeking treatment. Currently, Betsy resides in Colorado where she is an Associate Professor in the dental and dental hygiene departments at the University of Colorado, providing clinical and didactic instruction in periodontal therapy, nitrous oxide sedation, microbiology, immunology, pharmacology, and special needs patient care.



Betsy lectures extensively nationally and internationally on biologic basis for disease prevention, advanced instrumentation technique, current dental therapeutic modalities available, pediatric dental care, pharmacological considerations for the dental professional, microbiological and immunological aspects of dental disease, implications of stress on oral and systemic health and oral pathological concerns. As a Patron member of the Association of Professional Piercers, Betsy works as a liaison between dental professionals and the piercing community, providing relevant information on orofacial considerations of head and neck piercings.

The considerable negative press regarding oral piercing makes allies within the dental community particularly special. Betsy has provided outreach directly to the den-

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tal community on behalf of the piercing profession for several years. She has provided education to body piercers during the APP annual conference; often donating her stipend directly to the Al D. Scholarship. During the 2002 conference in Amsterdam she taught her class with a freshly broken finger. Those fortunate enough to attend her lectures find her to be an excellent educator and a valuable resource.

Recipient: Grant Dempsey
Presented by: Bethra Szumski

Grant Dempsey is the Managing Director/Owner of Cold Steel International Ltd. wholesale and manufacturing, owner of Cold Steel Piercing Studio in London, a partner in Cold Steel America's two Tattoo and Piercing Studios located in San Francisco, California, and a partner in the newly-founded Cold Steel USA Wholesale.

Although Grant has been piercing for over a decade, his



primary focus at this time is the wholesale end of the business, and new product development.

A true visionary, he worked on the formation of APP Europe many years ago and was appointed European Secretary. He served in this position for two and a half years. Although "APP Europe" has reverted back to U.S.-based operations, Grant has continued to work closely with many health departments, the medical industry, and insurance underwriters throughout Europe on behalf of the piercing community. It was due largely to his efforts that a one-day APP conference was held in London in 1997. Although held on short notice it attracted 150 piercers. The APP did not have the resources to return until 2002, but these early outreach efforts were truly monumental. Upon the APP's return to Europe, Grant once again provided crucial assistance. His company distributed over 5,000 invitations to the International Conference held in November of 2002. Grant has attended every APP event since 1997 and maintains Business Membership for himself and Corporate Associate Membership for Cold Steel.

— Bethra Szumski

YOUR BOARD AT WORK

This is to keep you apprised about the work efforts of the APP Board Members since being elected to their current positions.

PRESIDENT: Bethra Szumski

Board meeting attendance:

- Post Las Vegas conference meeting held 5–9, 2002
- Denver board meeting held August 4–5, 2002
- Post Amsterdam conference held 11–9, 2002
- APHA Philadelphia board meeting held 11–11, 2002
- New Orleans board meeting held January 9–11, 2003

I have participated in board meetings and educational events, overseeing registration and incidentals.

After the August board meeting Jason King and I traveled to Las Vegas to search for and secure a location for the 2003 Conference. A hotel was found and contracts for both 2003 and 2004 were executed.

I located and secured the location for the 2002 European Conference and managed many aspects of the event.

In early December of 2002 it was determined that our central office operations would need to be moved. Notice for the move was short but I was able to get to Dallas, Texas and transport the office to Albuquerque, New Mexico quickly and at minimum expense to the APP.

VICE PRESIDENT: Jason King

I hate to start my “what I accomplished my first year as Vice President speech” with a disclaimer, but here it goes: So much goes on behind the scenes. I think that as a board we have really established a great communication routine. I believe that this constant communication has yielded some amazing results. For the most part we have been able to deal with a variety of issues quickly and with a thoroughness that only a large amount of relevant and timely debate can provide.

Other “amazing results” include a European conference planned and executed with less than five month’s preparation. As far as my individual accomplishments go, Vice President is just a fancy name for the odds and ends guy with some “go fer” thrown in. I had a minor role in negotiating for the Riviera hotel for this and next year’s conferences. I researched and taught an entirely new course on materials for both the European and American Conferences (That was a really short sentence, but the number of hours spent doing the steel research for the classes and *Point* articles was ridiculous).

Additionally I did the new T-shirts for conference, maintained the “Jobs Board” section of the APP web site, and started a couple of projects which have not yet come to fruition. My single greatest event this year has definitely been the birth of my daughter Lilly. I know it doesn’t have anything to do with the Association but I couldn’t resist.

SECRETARY: Crystal Sims

My first year of serving as Secretary has been both challenging and rewarding. In addition to the traditional “secretarial” duties of taking minutes at our quarterly board meetings and answering questions people send via email, I also process applications for membership. This entails reviewing all of the information sent to us with the membership application including aftercare instructions, release forms, questionnaires and videos, and sending the applicants a list of suggestions for improving the level of health and safety awareness in their studio. Because we create a list of suggestions regardless of whether the member is accepted or not, processing applications is probably the most time consuming part of the position.

Helping with the Conferences is another big part of being an APP board member. As Secretary, I process the Al D. Scholarship applications and oversee the registration for attendees. I also had the opportunity to teach Studio Set-up in both Las Vegas and Amsterdam, and to teach Employee Management, and Customer Service and Marketing at the most recent Las Vegas Conference. Although I am new to public speaking, I very much enjoy teaching the classes.

Contributing articles to *The POINT* has also been kind of fun for me. I enjoy writing but seldom take the time to do it unless I’m forced, so having this as a requirement for my position has been good for me. I have contributed to every issue since I became a board member, and I hope to continue to contribute even after my term is over.

This year’s Amsterdam conference was immediately followed by the conference of the American Public Health Association (APHA) in Philadelphia, so I (along with most other board members) traveled directly to Philly from Amsterdam to help distribute information to medical professionals and public health inspectors. This was my first time sharing information with a very conservative group and I must say I was amazed and delighted at how well we were received.

Near the end of 2002 the position of APP employee (Administrative Assistant) came available, and I was able to recruit and train Caitlin McDiarmid for the position. Caitlin has proved to be an invaluable asset by organizing and streamlining many processes, thereby easing the workload on each board member (a welcome relief as we do not get paid to hold these positions).

This year I worked with Jim Ward designing the new APP website. Our goals were to make it easier to navigate, to add and update information, and to include new features such as the Job Board. If you have not already done so, please visit www.safepiercing.org to see what we have accomplished. Additional suggestions are welcome as we hope to continually improve the site.

Since I have the microphone (so to speak), I would like to add that I feel so honored to be working with the other board members who are serving with me. I have

learned so much from all of them and I am very proud of what we have been able to accomplish. It is inspiring to have such hardworking and dedicated people around me. I am very grateful to be a part of this board!

TREASURER: Paul King

In addition to attending all Board meetings, planning and working the European and Las Vegas Conferences, since in office, Paul King as Treasurer has accomplished the following:

- Redesigned several forms and updated protocols for Petty cash, Board Member Expense and Credit Card usage.
- Opened two Credit Lines, Advanta and American Express credit cards.
- Audited, inventoried and tracked the APP assets.
- Consolidated all financial bookkeeping systems down to one, Quickbooks Pro 2002. This has greatly increased the Board's ability to track the financial health of the organization and to budget for the year's outreach.
- Traveled to Albuquerque to help train the APP Employee, Caitlin McDairmid, in her duties particularly as they relate to Quickbooks.
- Prepared the Financials for 2002 Tax preparations and submitted the records to the Accountants on time. Tracked the Returns making sure they were submitted to the IRS and the California Franchise Tax Board on time.
- Prepared the Member's Meeting Financial Year in Review Reports for the Las Vegas Conference.
- Along with the rest of the Board, investigated and implemented various avenues for cutting expenses.
- Switched our checking account to a free and interest yielding account.
- Wrote articles on the History of Piercing for APP's, *The POINT*.

OUTREACH COORDINATOR: Megg Mass

As Outreach Coordinator, my job involves sending out information, doing interviews and fielding questions from researchers, reporters, piercers and the general public.

I spoke with Time Magazine, People, Harper's, Men's Health, and MTV, among others.

In November, several of us attended the Association of Public Health Administrators (APHA) convention, which draws tens of thousands of health administrators, health-care workers, educators and policy makers. For four days we answered questions and distributed pamphlets and manuals from our booth. The convention also put me in contact with some policy makers including a health department employee from Bermuda who is trying to clean up the tourist piercing trade. Through a connection made at APHA I was also able to list the APP and our conferences on an international database of continuing education for healthcare professionals and administrators.

We also made APP contact information available to the attendees of the American College Health Association conference in May. Since the student population is a

major demographic in our industry, targeting healthcare workers who focus specifically on this group is essential.

I have been developing APP-sponsored Public Service Announcements that will be aired on university radio stations across the country to give general information about finding a safe piercer and choosing and caring for piercings. Contact us to run the spots on your local stations with your shop as a co-sponsor.

I have also started the Statistics Project, which was explained in issue 25 of *The Point*. We must gather accurate statistics about piercing to have leverage with legislators who would otherwise believe the exaggerated numbers of those who are against us.

The largest part of my job this year has been working with piercers and lobbying legislators across the country to initiate and revise body art regulations. I have been in contact with folks at all levels: county, city, state, and even the European Community, writing letters, making phone calls and providing information

In an effort to keep New York from prohibiting oral and genital piercings, I wrote the APP position paper on genital piercings, and revised our existing oral piercing position paper. The European Community is also researching the feasibility of Europe-wide piercing regulations, and I have provided them our information and contacts.

MEDICAL COORDINATOR/

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Elayne Angel

Attended all Board Meetings and APP Conferences (with the exception of the 2002 Las Vegas Conference, due to being in the hospital for a pinched nerve in my neck. Ouch).

Taught Aftercare and co-taught Anatomy courses at the Amsterdam Conference. Taught classes at 2003 Las Vegas Conference including Advanced Member's Techniques, and the first ever Basic Techniques for Non-Members, and co-taught Anatomy I and II.

Educated medical and health care professionals at the Louisiana AIDS Healthworker's Annual Meeting, and meeting of Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN).

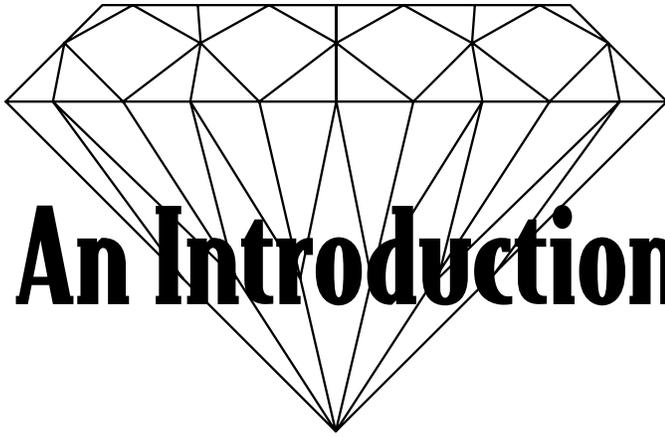
Assisted ETR Associates with updating and editing of educational brochures about body piercing.

Compiled and maintain listing of piercing friendly medical professionals, including doctors, nurses, dentists, dental hygienists, radiologists, wound care specialists and others who are willing to be called upon for piercing information and support.

Assisted two attorneys with information on safe piercing. They were prosecuting two different cases of infections caused to ear cartilage pierced by ear stud guns.

Daily, I reply to emails from troubled piercees who were pierced by those who are less skilled or conscientious than members of the APP. Generally the problems stem from inappropriate (poorly fitting or low quality) jewelry or bad aftercare suggestions.

—continued on page 21



An Introduction to Gemstones

by James Green

Webster's defines a gem "as any jewel, whether stone, pearl or the like, having value and beauty that are intrinsic and not derived from its setting: a precious or, sometimes, a semiprecious stone cut and polished for ornament. A stone of value because it is carved or engraved, as a cameo or intaglio." Additionally, the dictionary states that gemstones or gem material is a stone or material from which a gem may be cut. I wonder if the beach glass I found last week would qualify if I cut it to fit a setting?

What qualifies, as a precious vs. a semi-precious gem is debated, although clearly semi-precious stones are less valued than precious stones. Some examples of semi-precious gems are Amethyst, Garnet, and Lapis. Traditionally, Diamond, Ruby, Sapphire and Emerald are considered precious gems. All other gems are considered semi-precious. Many people will take issue with such a narrow range of stones labeled as precious since some gems are rarer and can cost more than the traditional "precious" stones.

Gemstones are cut in a variety of shapes and styles. Two of the common cuts are faceted and cabochon. A faceted stone has many small polished surfaces that focus light in a way that much of the light entering the stone is reflected back out giving it brilliance. Diamonds are a prime example of a faceted stone. Cabochons are cut in a convex or hemispherical form. Opals are a good example of the rounded smooth qualities associated with cabochons. Of the "precious" stones, Diamond is the only one that is never cut as a cabochon. Ruby, Sapphire and Emerald all make beautiful "cabs." The weight of a cab in

these stones will be heavier than its faceted counterpart so you will pay more for the same diameter stone.

There are natural gems, which may be heat treated to enhance color or laser drilled to remove imperfections. There are "synthetic" stones which are lab grown and are identical to the natural stone. Only a trained gemologist can positively identify the created stone from the natural. Then there are the "imitation" stones, an artificial likeness meant to imitate natural stones. The term "imitation" is usually applied to glass and plastic, although it can refer to natural minerals too. I like lab grown stones since the color is outstanding and they are cut quite well. You can get gem quality and color for a fraction of the cost of genuine gems.

Since the dawn of civilization, special powers have been attributed to gemstones. They have been used for casting and breaking spells, for healing and for religious purposes. Each stone is said to have its own unique magical and metaphysical qualities. For those interested in the magical qualities of gemstones there is a lot of information available from ancient to New Age beliefs regarding the power of gems. I made a ring for myself some years back with a half carat diamond and I have to say it makes me feel great when I wear it.

James Green is the owner of Clayton Limited Editions, a manufacturer of gold body piercing jewelry. James has been in the jewelry business for 28 years. He is the former gold manufacturing manager for Gauntlet and has been producing gold body jewelry for 8 years. You can reach James at www.claytonlimited.com

HERBAL PIERCING CARE: COMFREY

by Megg Mass

The past few years have shown a dramatic increase in the use of complementary and natural medicine in this country, and the medical industry has been scrambling to either incorporate or discredit many of the more widely used therapies. Piercers would do well to follow suit, particularly since much of our practice involves long-term healing of minor wounds, for which gentle care is often the best. Many of us also believe that working with our bodies as they heal themselves is preferable to “treating” them with man-made chemicals. While natural healing is not everyone’s style, there is no harm in having more information to draw on. Even if you do not agree with herbal medicine, you may find yourself with a client who refuses synthetic chemicals but still needs your help. Or you may have a staff member who over stretches an ear and is willing to try anything to get it back to normal. With that in mind, I offer the following information.

Symphytum officinale, or common comfrey, is renowned among herbalists for its ability to seal wounds, eliminate swelling, reduce scarring, and soothe pain. Named for the Latin word *conferva*, to “grow together,” comfrey has been used medicinally to treat heavy bleeding, wounds, and broken bones since about 400 BC. Quoting herbalist Laura Kriedger/Elchai: “Its ability to rejuvenate human cells and knit cells together is legendary.” According to one source, “unchaste” women once took comfrey baths before marriage in a last-ditch effort to repair the hymen and restore lost virginity. More recently several medical studies have found comfrey’s effects “significant” for inflammation and of “good repair effect” after surgical procedures.

Also known as knitbone, bruisewort and boneset, comfrey is a perennial plant with large hairy gray-green leaves and bell-shaped blue, mauve, or white flowers. It grows throughout Europe, North America, and Australia and was traditionally eaten as a nutritive green vegetable. The USDA experimented with it as a forage crop for livestock due to its high protein content (15 ñ 30% when dry). But its main use has always been medicinal.

The impressive wound healing capabilities of comfrey are attributed to its high allantoin content. Allantoin, also found in human breast milk and now made artificially, has been shown to markedly increase the rate of cell proliferation both when used internally and externally. Internally, it is absorbed directly in the intestines, leading to its traditional use for internal wounds and digestive disorders. More important for our industry, wounds and burns treated with allantoin heal more quickly, possibly due to an increase in white blood cells in the area. According to the British Medical Journal, allantoin is particularly powerful in strengthening epithelial formation. When placed on surface skin, it is also able to diffuse through the tissue to affect underlying wounds, no doubt contributing to its alleged usefulness in treating broken bones. (Some sources explain that while comfrey does not heal broken bones itself, by eliminating swelling and increasing cell production in the area it did allow the bone to be reset and heal with fewer complications. This gave the appearance of healing breaks to the physicians of the past.)



The high mucilage content of comfrey increases the efficacy of allantoin for sealing open wounds by acting as a “plaster” as it dries. The mucilage further promotes healthy skin by moisturizing and calming irritation and pain. Rosmarinic acid in the leaf serves as an anti-inflammatory and may help heal blood-vessel injuries. Astringent tannins account for comfrey’s use to stop bleeding. Other constituents include starch, phenolic acids, gum, pyrrolizidine alkaloids, volatile oil, potassium, calcium, phosphorous, iron, magnesium, cobalt, Vitamins B, B11, B12, C and E.

While comfrey can be found in many commercial creams and ointments, the most effective form for our clients is an infusion, or tea, made from the dried leaf. Simply put one ounce (about a handful) of the dried leaf in a pint (two cups) of freshly boiled water in a glass or glazed ceramic container. (Avoid metal and porous materials, which could alter or absorb the volatile oils. Do not boil the leaf.) Cover, and let steep for at least 20 minutes. Covering the container keeps the medicinal oils from escaping in the steam. When it is cool enough, soak the piercing for several minutes, several times a day. Although it is not applicable for our purposes, herbalist Susun Weed suggests soaking no more than twice a day if sutures are present. Some sources say an infusion of only one teaspoon to one cup of boiled water may still be effective.

Because comfrey is so effective at knitting skin together,

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***Genital Piercings* —**

How to Make it Easy For Your Clients

by *Elayne Angel*

Editorial Disclaimer: This article does not represent the views of the APP. Any opinions, thoughts or ideas expressed herein are those of the author alone. This is NOT an “instructional” or “how-to” article and is in no way a complete discussion of the topic. It merely reviews some specifics of how genital piercing is handled in my studio. It is intended to offer hints, tips and ideas to professional piercers. Feel free to take anything that works for you, and leave the rest.

We live in a society that does not practice genital pride. The custom of genital piercings is not part of our heritage and we are not, as in some cultures, indoctrinated from an early age to look forward to it as a rite of passage. So, there are extra challenges for the seeker of genital piercings. It is counter to our Western culture, our family or religious upbringing, and our natural protectiveness of the family jewels. Let's face it: it takes balls to get your genitals pierced!

Performing genital piercings puts professional piercers in a unique position of power and authority, and our customers in a position (no pun intended) of vulnerability not ordinarily experienced in other piercing situations. Many of our clients are scared witless for even the most common and accepted of piercings including ears. For them to take a step that requires displaying what is commonly referred to as “private parts” to a stranger takes some nerve indeed.

Of course, it is important to put our clients at ease regardless of the particular placement of the piercing. But there are a variety of added factors that make genital work especially challenging for many of our piercees.

Those brave souls who come to us for genital piercings must disrobe under bright lights to be scrutinized in a way that they might not even tolerate from their most intimate partners. Many people in this culture are modest about disrobing in front of a stranger under any circumstances. Particularly because the piercing situation is elective and we are not medically licensed personnel, we must perform in an exceptionally clinical and professional manner. That is not to say we can't be friendly or maintain a dialogue containing humor, but the situation calls for good judgment and good taste. Save the sexual double entendres for your social encounters, and leave them out of your piercing sessions.

When a client appears reluctant to disrobe or reveal themselves enough to perform the piercing (knees snapped shut, for example) I make a comment such as, “I'm a good piercer but rumors that I can do this without looking are slightly overstated; I'll have to take a look and be able to see what I'm doing to pierce you.” I also remind them that the sooner

we get started, the quicker it will be over and done.

Then clients have to deal with the common, if largely unfounded concern that it must be more painful to pierce the nether regions than other parts of the body. I have plenty of clients tell me that their ear piercings hurt worse than their genital piercings. (Which I often repeat for the benefit of reassuring the nervous and anxious piercee.) Ergo, how bad could it really be...?

One of the things I do that may help to make the situation more comfortable for clients is that I charge the same fee as for other piercings. In essence it sends a message stating, “Relax, this is the same as any other piercing, and nothing different or unusual.” For the sake of propriety with minors, I do have the photos of genital piercings in a separate album from the one containing photos of ear and facial piercings, navels and nipples. In no other way are they made to seem “special” or “different” than other piercings. Ultimately, they're not. But, psychologically and emotionally they are more difficult for many customers than other areas of the body.

It is important to demonstrate a high level of confidence in order to put the client at ease. If you don't possess the necessary specific training, experience and skill to exude a high level of confidence, then perhaps you should decline to perform (genital) piercings. I know it helps my clients to feel comfortable because I feel comfortable. I know that I can provide the fastest, gentlest, most well-placed piercing possible and make it minimally traumatic physically and emotionally. Because I personally have significant comfort and confidence it is easy for me to assure my customers, and help them to feel at ease.

Of course, certain genital piercings such as Vertical and Horizontal Hood piercings, Triangles, Dydoes, etc., are very anatomically dependent. Another way to put clients at ease is to inform them prior to the piercing (or consultation) that not everyone is anatomically suited to every placement. That way they know that you need to examine them to be certain they are built for the piercing(s) they are requesting. It would be far more unpleasant to proceed as though the piercing will be able to take place, then look at their build and pronounce them unfit. If they know beforehand that there is a chance they won't be able to get the piercing due to anatomical differences, they will be less likely to feel that there is something “wrong” with their body's configuration. I often quote myself: “Whoever said ‘Ya seen one, ya seen ‘em all’ sure hadn't seen many! Because everyone is dif-

ferent.” I find that being “normal down there” is a concern expressed by a lot of clients who haven’t had much opportunity to compare themselves to others of the same gender.

Another important matter for all piercings, but particularly with genital piercings, is to take charge of the situation in the piercing room. It is most uncomfortable for someone to wonder, or have to ask you, the piercer, “Um, should I, uh, take my pants off now?” It is much preferable for you to lead them into the room, show them where to place their belongings, direct their actions with a friendly yet clinical, commanding manner. “I’ll need you to take off whatever clothing is on the bottom half. Please hang them on the coat rack and not on the floor, (remember they’ll be going on next to a fresh piercing soon) then sit onto the end of the table, please.”

This way, they can relax more because YOU are so clearly in charge. You have obviously done this many times before, know what you are doing now, and have the situation well in hand. This will help to minimize client anxiety and their discomfort with the overall situation.

Speak frankly, openly, and without reserve (though clinically) about sexual matters. It is vital for them to be apprised of information about sexual activity during healing. If you appear shy and embarrassed it makes this aspect that much more difficult for the client. Offer the information to them without the client having to ask. We have a moral obligation to be explicit and highly informative about these issues. The health of our clients is in our hands, and there exists potential for disease transmission through unsafe sex with healing piercings. If we don’t make it abundantly clear what they need to do, what they must not do, and why, we are being remiss in our responsibilities.

In my practice we do not require an abstinence period, but rather, “Be safe, hygienic, and ‘listen to your body’ during the entire initial healing time.” I elaborate about the importance of avoiding sharing all bodily fluids through the use of barrier protection. I talk about use of condoms, dental dams, and waterproof bandages (for scrotum, pubic, etc.) even if they are in a long-term, committed monogamous relationship. I let them know that they need to ease up if anything feels sore. If they don’t, it can result in delayed healing, scarring, migration, and even rejection if they are too rough during initial healing. I also describe how a recently-healed piercing is more vulnerable than an older, seasoned, settled-in one. The new cells are more delicate and more easily broken (resulting in re-opening the wound) so it is crucial to use good judgment about safer sex even after the initial healing time.

I was rather stunned at the start of my career when clients expressed surprise and distress over a bleeding piercing. After some initial experiences with this aspect of human behavior I made myself a promise. I vowed to tell ALL of my piercees, regardless of piercing placement, BEFORE I pierced them, that there is a possibility that their piercing could bleed. Simple, right? I am amazed at how much trouble this little sentence saves me! I tell them: “The piercings that bleed tend to be good healers. A good blood supply is good for healing, as the body can bring nutrients,

take waste away, and process the piercing more effectively.” It changes a situation in which a client may have experienced much distress: “Oh no! I’m bleeding!” into a happy moment: “Oh good! I’m bleeding! It’s going to heal fast!”

In the case of Prince Albert and Apadravya piercings I make certain to announce several times prior to the piercing that it is one of the most likely to bleed of all the piercings. I alert them that it could bleed freely, off and on for several days and that would be perfectly normal. Then I reiterate, and tell them that sometimes when some clients see bleeding, they still ask me, “Is this normal?” I try to prepare them as best I can without alarming them. Because if you don’t tell them before the piercing, it sure can be mighty shocking afterwards when a client sees their PA bleeding if they didn’t expect it to happen.

Following the procedure, for all female genital piercings I suggest they wear a panty liner (which I provide) even if I don’t see any bleeding immediately. The piercing can begin to bleed once they stand up and move around, even if it doesn’t bleed when you first do the piercing. It provides a clean, fresh surface, and protects clothing against blood stains. I offer regular liners and a new style made for use with thong underwear.

For male genital piercings on the penis itself, I use the “rubber chicken” method of wrapping a piece of sterile gauze around the area, followed by covering the penis with a rubber glove, secured with a rubber band at the top. Again, even if the piercing doesn’t bleed right away, I advise them to let me “wrap them to go.” It can save them an embarrassing experience to be sure. Of course, they will need to remove the wrapping to urinate. If there is no sign of bleeding then they need not re-wrap. It is simply a matter of protecting clothing and home furnishings from blood.

I do suggest that piercees wear clean cotton underwear for a while following a genital piercing. Most find the support of relatively snug undergarments to be more comfortable, and it does help to protect the area from germs in the environment, too. I also advise that they sleep in underwear or pajama bottoms during healing if there are pets in the bed.

One of the final things I do after a body piercing (regardless of placement) is to finish off by cleaning up with a sterile saline wipe (I use PDI Hospital Formula Sterile Wipes, saturated with sterile saline). They feel cooler than the ambient temperature and have a wonderfully soothing, cool-down effect that is MOST appreciated by my clients. It immediately takes much of the “sting” away and the usual response from piercees is a big smile and the exclamation, “Aahhhh...”

All in all, piercing of the genitals is much the same as any body piercing. That said, some of these tips or ideas could make it easier for your clients, and that makes it worth the time it took for me to share my thoughts, and worth your effort to make the piercing experience as easy as possible for your clients.

Many of my clients tell me they came in for their piercing feeling very anxious and fearful, and leave feeling that they had a pleasant experience. That makes it all worthwhile.

THE CONCH PIERCING

In the piercing world we have come to call the piercing of the ear's concha, a "conch" piercing, pronouncing the ch softly, as in "church." However, per *Webster's New World Dictionary, 2nd Edition*, the correct pronunciation of the ch should be hard, sounding like the letter k. I bring this up merely as a matter of curiosity or trivial fact. I am certainly not suggesting the piercing community change tradition.

Sometime in the early 1990's the original Nomad body piercing shop in San Francisco, owned by Blake Perlingieri and Kristian White, started referring to this piercing as the "Sadhu," a rather catchy name that has stuck. This term appears to refer specifically to placement in the bottom of the conch, sitting vertically. The term Sadhu refers collectively to Indian Hindu Holy men. "Incorrectly they are sometimes referred to as 'Fakirs' who were originally Moslem street magicians who adopted a few yogic techniques for their repertoires and used them solely for entertainment."¹ It is a particular subset of these Sadhus, the Gorak Nath's or Gorakhnath's, that have their conchae pierced. There is a minimum of historical documentation on the conch piercing. Its practice seems sporadic within different cultures. Other than the Gorak Nath's, I have found only the Mangebetu to have strong cultural ties to the perforation and adorning of the conchae.

The Mangebetu, sometimes spelled Mangbetu, are an African tribe found in the Republic of Zaire, (previously known as Congo). The Mangebetu were formerly regarded for their sophisticated court and developed arts. It is the women of this tribe who still can be seen wearing the beautiful long pieces of ivory in their conchae. The conch perforations often "hold monkey bones which are used to part their hair."² Sometimes the bones were simply for decoration. In the past when elongation of the skull was more widely practiced, and hair styles were worn high to accentuate the skull's shape, the conch jewelry was used to support the hair. The woman's hair was sometimes extended using hair of the dead from an enemy tribe. It is, of course, impossible to say when the conch piercing was practiced for the first time. The history of the Sadhus has been long debated. Some archeologists believe that asceticism was implicit in the teachings of the Rg-Veda, written in the Vedic language, what we know as "The Vedas," holy texts which came to India with the "invasion" of the Nordic Aryan Tribes around 1500 BCE. These Aryan Tribes became the upper castes, the Brahmans, in the Hindu society. The other camp believes that yogic ascetic and other shamanistic practices can be traced much further back to the Indus Valley Culture, already fully developed in 2500 BCE. As is usually the

case in history, it is probably a little of both.

"Almost nothing is known of the historical Gorakhnath. His personality was quickly distorted by myth and magical folklore...It seems he was an ascetic yogi who lived sometime around the 9th to 12th Century, CE. He established a new synthesis between Pasuhupata Shaivism, Tantra and the so-called Teachings of Siddhas. He was closely linked with Vajrayana (Tantric) Buddhism, and is also credited with the authorship of a lost treatise, called simply Hatha Yoga, and with the foundation of the movement of that same name. His teachings also involve the so-called "left-hand" path of Tantra, which involves sexual tantra with a partner, as opposed to simple visualization (the "right-hand" path)."³

"The main symbol that characterizes the Gorakhnath's, are huge earrings worn in split ears. Gorakhnath's are also called Kanphatas or Kanphata Yogis ('Kan' meaning ear and 'phat' meaning split), because at the initiation ceremony the ears are split to insert enormous earrings. These earrings are commonly called "yogi's earrings" and are made of agate, glass, and various materials. Traditionally rhinoceros horn was a favorite due to its durability and because it is a sacred animal. Such rings covered with gold have been found. The wearing of the earrings is of great importance. If one is broken, another must be substituted before the yogi can eat, engage in conversation, or carry out religious duties. Modern adherents claim this piercing the central hollow of the ears is a technique by which the acquisition of magical powers is promoted."⁴

The piercing procedure is performed "with the double edge 'Bhairavi knife' (Bhairavi is a manifestation of Shiva). Before the operation, the Nath Babas are called Aughars, meaning 'unfinished' and many will never reach the second stage."⁵ It is not known at what point in the development of this subgroup of Sadhus, that they began piercing their conchae, if they originated the practice, or if the practice existed in a previous sect. They have certainly been the only Hindu practitioners of this ritual for some time.

¹ Shiva, by Paula Fouce and Denise Tomecko, Tamarind Press, 1990. Page 79

² Africa Adorned, by Angela Fisher, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishing, 1984. Page 79

³ http://www.kheper.net/topics/natha_siddhas.html

⁴ <http://www.philter.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/hindu/devot/gorak.html> by Richard Shaw, Lancaster University, St Martin's College.

⁵ Sadhus Holy Men of India, by Dolf Martsuiker, Thames and Hudson 1993. Page 35

DENTAL DANGERS

On some occasions it is simpler to find a qualified piercer than a good dentist...

It's crazy, but a few days ago I was eating a cookie, the Maria type cookie (which taste great) when suddenly, crack!! My tooth broke, as did my cookie. There was nothing I could do except go to the dentist, withstand the noisy instruments, and get the tooth fixed. (To tell the truth, I prefer the sound of the tattoo gun working on my skin).

Well, I started to look for a dentist; I thought that this would be an easy task. I took the Yellow Pages to look for one in my neighborhood, but that didn't work out. I called friends to get some recommendations. This didn't work out either. So I went directly to some dentists that are near my studio, but no luck...

So here I am struggling for something that to most people sounds so simple: a dentist. Although many people might not believe me, it has been a nightmare. Ironic that a person like me, who has decorated his body with tattoos and piercings; who wrote a book on piercing, and who is the editor of a monthly tattoo and piercing magazine, would not be happy with dentists. Why? Because their offices have less stringent hygiene and inferior methods of sterilization compared to what I offer in my studio, or to what I would recommend in our publication.

I found it amazing but I called 12 different dentists in my area, and no one had an autoclave! Two of them didn't even know what an autoclave was! This is serious, and I don't want to scare you, but there were some that could not even distinguish between sterilization and disinfection. Even so, there were some that tried to convince me that their equipment was free from virus and bacteria.

In some places they still use dry heat sterilizers. We all know that an autoclave is expensive, but is health not the most important concern?

Almost all the dentists I met wore nice white coats. It gives them more class and it protects their clothes while



they work, but they forget something: The use of gloves!

At this point the pain of my broken tooth was almost unbearable, but I kept on looking for the ideal place to go; a place that was clean and hygienic with appropriate practices.

I finally found a friendly dentist that had new and sterilized equipment, an autoclave, and an ultrasonic cleaner. He wears gloves and so on. It looked to be the perfect dental office. But, (yes, there was a but), all his biohazard went directly to the regular garbage; they didn't care that they were throwing their tissues with blood in the regular trash. Nor did they know what to do with their used needles.

It is really strange: Some people would like to have a piercing but they don't get one because they are afraid to contract some disease or infection. Although for me it would have been a lot easier to find a good, safe hygienic piercer than a trustworthy dentist.

By the time I finished writing this, I had already lost my tooth...

by Danny Yerna
Wakantanka
Mexico City

REVIEW

BME IAM

online community on BME (Body Modification Ezine)
<http://iam.bmezine.com/>

This often controversial mega-site is home to "IAM" the worlds largest body art-related on-line community.

BME began in 1994 and has grown to consume an estimated bandwidth of 20 gigabits per second (For non techno-geeks, this is HUGE). IAM was added in October of 2000. To date the community has had approximately 20,000 total users with an average of 6,000 active users at any given time. This area of the site contains no advertisements and is funded primarily by the other portions of BME and also donations.

Each member has their own page on which to post personal and professional information, pictures of their various mods, practitioner portfolios, forums, surveys and diaries. Communication functions include private messaging and multi-functional buddy lists. Thanks to Shannon Larrett, all site functions are very user-friendly.

Community participation in the overall site is strongly encouraged. Members who submit images, reviews, experiences, or add news stories are given membership credit. Although available to all those with some form of modification this site is "a community of friends." As such, there is a zero-tolerance policy with regards to the ridicule of other members, the posting of "hatespeech", use of pages primarily as a business venture, spamming, stalking, or other antisocial or negative behaviors.

Shannon Larratt, the site's administrator, is generously offering free IAM memberships to APP members. Contact info@safepiercing.org for more information.

ATTENTION APP MEMBERS

It is never too soon to start: Take some video of yourself piercing for the NEXT APP conference for the advanced techniques class.

Participants should remember to be professional and use appropriate bedside manner, even if they are working on close friends.

Mini DV is preferred but 8 mm is acceptable.
Send your tapes to:

Elayne Angel
1128 Decatur Street
New Orleans, LA 70116

TRANSITIONS



CONGRATULATIONS!—Big wishes for a happy future together go out to Joe Hruby of Borneo Joe's Flaming Bones and his lovely new wife, Yuli Stiyowati. They were married recently in traditional costume, in Indonesia, where they reside.

Now Hear This!

The APP now has a Job Board on our web site!
See it at: www.safepiercing.org

You can find the following categories in which to post or answer an ad.

- Apprentices seeking Apprenticeships
- Experienced Piercers seeking Employment
- Studios seeing Experienced Piercers
- Studios seeking Apprentice Piercers

Piercers, Genital Piercings, & the Line of Morality

Editor's note: Reprinted from the internet with permission <http://tattoo.about.com/cs/psafety/a/aa040503.htm>. From the about.com web site's section on Piercing and Tattooing. Obviously, this type of situation is not common, but the professional piercing community should be kept informed.

Recently, I received an email from a reader, Elayne Angel, who was concerned about the story that Deana McAuley shared about her triangle piercing experience. (<http://tattoo.about.com/library/bltrianglepic.htm>). The cause for concern was that the piercer told Deana that some of his clients liked to be pierced during the moment of orgasm, and that he rubbed her clitoris before the piercing to "help her relax".

This was the reader's response to that article: *"I have worked very hard (since the 1980's) to professionalize and elevate body piercing. When I see something like I read in the article about Triangle piercings it shocks and appalls me...This is NOT accepted or appropriate piercing practice. And to see this on your site, it leads people who don't know any better to believe that some form of sexual activity (including with the piercer) is a common aspect of a piercing procedure. This is NOT the case...Body piercing should take place in an environment and with an attitude that fosters a clinical, if friendly exchange. Not a sexual one."*
— Elayne Angel, Rings of Desire, Inc.

First, let me say that I agree with Elayne completely. Any time you enter a tattoo or piercing establishment, you should be met with professionalism in a clean, comfortable atmosphere. I also agree with her that any kind of sexual activity is not, in any way, common procedure. Getting a piercing, even a genital one, is not a sexual event – it's a clinical procedure no different than piercing an eyebrow or ear. And no one, and I do mean no one, has the right to touch you anywhere or in any way that you do not approve of. (More on that later in the article)

That being said, I would also like to explain that there is absolutely nothing wrong with a person or couple that wishes for their piercing to be an erotic or spiritual experience if all parties involved are agreeable to it. I have learned that the body art community consists of a wide variety of colorful people with many different social and sexual ideals. What one person finds offensive may be perfectly acceptable to another. We are not here to judge each other—we are simply a community of vast standards.

I don't know if the piercer in question from the story above crossed the line of decency or not – I only know the story that was sent to me. However, I got no indication that the client was in any way offended or felt violated by her experience – in fact, she was completely elated. If what transpired was agreeable to the client and

piercer, none of us has the right to say whether this was right or wrong.

However (there are a lot of howevers here), I do feel that any non-conventional activity should be requested by the client(s) and discussion about such activity should be initiated by the client(s), not the piercer. A professional piercer should not put a client in an awkward position by suggesting something they may find offensive. This, in itself, is a breach of the piercer's professionalism. Some clients may feel obligated to perform something the piercer suggested, or may feel very uncomfortable afterward if they decline. And any client requesting such an activity should also do so with respect and understand that many piercers will not be willing to do this. Piercers can be offended, too! A client needs to be very careful when making such a request, and be respectful if the piercer refuses.

Preventing Abuse—Don't be a Victim

Unfortunately, there have been cases when a so-called "professional" piercer crossed the line of decency to the point of victimizing the client. Georgie shared her experience on BME of just such a violation.

The behavior by this piercer was so appalling, the client should have immediately left the studio and had the dirtbag arrested. (Editor's note: Immediately following a genital piercing, the piercer stroked her genital area, penetrated her with a gloved hand, kissed her, fondled her breasts, and pulled out his penis.)

The only problem is, when you're actually in a situation like that, defending yourself is easier said than done. Especially if you're not prepared for the possibility of such a thing happening, it comes as such a shock that your body doesn't respond with the "fight or flight" instinct. Instead, you enter a "haze" between fiction and reality, not really sure where you actually are, hoping it's really just a bad dream. The only way to (hopefully) avoid this haze is to be prepared.

This is not intended to scare you, but to prepare you, for the possibility of an abusive piercer (or anyone else, for that matter) who may try to take advantage of you in a vulnerable state. Especially when getting a genital piercing—and especially for females—this does put you in a situation of certain vulnerability. Realizing this is the first step toward preparedness.

Any time you enter a room alone with a stranger, you are vulnerable. Add removing any article of clothing to the mix, and you add to your vulnerability. Now give them access to your private areas, and you tip the scale of empowerment to the stranger's advantage. A truly professional piercer with no intention of misconduct will not take advantage of you in any way, regardless of your current state. But a perverted sicko with no professionalism or ethics will see this as a perfect opportunity to satisfy their own disgusting whims at your expense.

Remember, this is usually not the case, but it can happen, so be prepared! Here are some things you can do to

avoid finding yourself in a very uncomfortable position.

- Be 100% confident in the studio's reputation. A well-known, highly-recommended studio with strict attention to cleanliness and professionalism is usually going to be a lot more picky about the type of people they hire to represent them.
- Be 100% confident about the piercer's reputation. Besides the studio having a good reputation, the piercer should also have a good name for clean, professional, quality work. People aren't going to recommend someone they had a bad experience with.
- Be 100% comfortable with the piercer. Don't just walk in and go right for the piercing. Talk with the piercer and/or schedule a consultation with them. Sometimes a piercing consultation involves removing your clothing in order for the piercer to determine if you're anatomically suitable for a particular piercing – do not allow this until you have had all of your questions answered and you are completely comfortable with them. You can even schedule a second consultation for that purpose if you need time to think about it.
- Bring a friend with you. Any person with bad intentions will be much less likely to try anything if there are witnesses. Bringing a friend large strong enough to potentially kick an abuser's ass doesn't hurt, either.

If, despite taking the above precautions, you find yourself being victimized (whether you are alone or with a friend), please do not just lie there and take it. You need to tell yourself to shake the haze off! Here are some things you can and need to do:

- Stop the piercer. At whatever moment you realize you are being violated, tell them to stop. Doesn't matter if they are in the middle of the piercing procedure – tell them to stop. If they stop, get up. Got a needle sticking in you? Pull it out. If they won't stop, use force. Whatever it takes, get them to stop.
- Forget your modesty, grab your clothes and get the hell out of the room. Get to the front of the studio or wherever the phone is and tell them to dial 911. Most studio owners and/or employees are going to be just as upset about this misconduct and will help you have the offender detained and arrested.
- If you cannot get cooperation from anyone in the studio, you might be able to get help from another customer. If this fails to bring results, your only choice is to leave the studio and call the police yourself from the nearest phone. Be sure to let the authorities know that you were refused help by the entire staff of the shop – at this point, that makes all of them accomplices to a crime.
- Show no mercy. Too many people lose their momentum at this point and give up. Then when the police ask if they want to press charges, they say no because they don't want to cause any trouble, they're tired and they just want it to be over with. But if you let these

abusers get away, they will still be out there to harm someone else. Protect yourself and protect others.

- If you are a minor, entrust an adult who will support you through the ordeal. If your parents don't believe you or are too busy being angry about you getting a piercing they didn't approve of, find someone else to help you. A teacher, a counselor, another relative—whatever it takes. Don't give up just because someone tries to minimize your story saying you're "just a kid".

Empowering yourself against someone who tries to victimize you can make you a stronger person. It inspires others to fight back or come forward about abuse they have endured. It makes it more difficult for potential abusers to find weak prey to attack. Do your part to help make this a safer world for everyone by protecting yourself with knowledge. Never assume you're safe, and always prepare for the worst. In most cases, you'll find it to be unnecessary and overly excessive—and that's a good thing.

—Karen Hudson

<http://tattoo.about.com/>

Body Piercing & Tattooing Advisory

The Massachusetts Board of Cosmetology has prohibited the practices of tattooing and body piercing in licensed cosmetology salons in the state. These are not subjects included in the Board's curriculum for licensure and therefore, they do not have guidelines for formal training in these areas.

Although the Department of Public Health has recently promulgated rules & regulations for body piercing and tattooing, these procedures are not to be performed in cosmetology salons.

Any cosmetologist, aesthetician, or manicurist who knowingly performs body piercing or tattooing (or variations of tattooing such as permanent cosmetics, micropigmentation, permanent makeup, or cosmetic tattooing) in a licensed salon will face disciplinary action.

If you have any questions regarding this notice please contact the Board of Cosmetology at 617-727-3067.

An internet story posted in July 2003 reported that a piercing studio owner and employee were arrested in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, for failing to request or require identification, and for performing piercings on underage individuals. They could face a \$459 fine or up to 30 days in jail if convicted.

State law does require that piercees be 18 or over and present ID, or if they are under 18 years of age, the parent must be present, and both must have ID.

An undercover sting operation was prompted by a number of complaints. In the operation, the police sent people into the studio to request body piercings, and none of them were required to present ID.

Documents were seized that show such disregard for the law had been taking place prior to the undercover operation.

Salesman Feared Dead; Escapee Held

Searchers hunt for body in swamps of Louisiana

By Kirk Mitchell, *Denver Post* Staff Writer



An Israeli father and volunteers were scouring alligator-infested swamps in Louisiana on Thursday for the body of the man's son authorities believe was killed after picking up a hitchhiker who escaped from a Colorado prison.

The FBI arrested the escapee, Jonathan Lee Vernier, 31, in Miami in

the stolen van of Ran Mesika, 22.

Mesika, an Israeli salesman, has been missing since May 2, while working in Lake Charles, La.

Shimon Mesika, 47, Ran Mesika's father, and 14 of his son's friends who flew to the United States from Israel have been searching for his body in rice paddies and swamps the past two weeks, Shimon Mesika said Thursday.

Authorities believe the body may be in the marshland of rural Louisiana, near where he was last spotted on a surveillance camera.

"I wake every morning with this nightmare," Mesika said. "It's like I'm in a movie."

Vernier was indicted this week by a federal grand jury in Key West, said Marcos Daniel Jimenez, U.S. attorney for the southern district of Florida. He was charged with unauthorized use of a credit card, interstate transportation of a stolen vehicle and resisting federal officers. He has not been charged in connection with Mesika's disappearance.

Ran Mesika embarked in early April on a cross-country business trip from San Diego, his father said. He was selling jewelry used for nose and body piercings to shops.

On April 30, he picked up Vernier, who was hitchhiking, in Houston.

Ran Mesika had once hitchhiked across South America and was not afraid to pick up a stranger, said his friend Gilad Erlich, 23, of Israel, who is now helping in the search.

Erlich was in San Diego when he received a call from Ran Mesika, who told him he was traveling with a hitchhiker. Erlich said he warned Mesika not to trust the hitchhiker, but his friend said he had been with the hitchhiker two days and "he was cool."

"My son is very naive," Mesika said. "If he meets someone, he makes friends with them. He wanted to help anyone on the street."

At 5:40 a.m. on May 2, Mesika and Vernier were filmed together by a security camera inside a Lake Charles Wal-Mart store, said Tim Miller, director of Texas Equusearch, a nonprofit organization in Houston that looks for missing persons.

Three hours later, a camera at an Iowa, La., automated teller machine filmed Vernier, who was alone, removing money from Mesika's bank account using his credit card, Miller said. His father said \$3,000 was taken from the account at ATMs from Louisiana to Florida.

Shimon Mesika, a manager of a professional soccer team in Israel, said that until May 2 his son had been calling daily. When several days passed without his hearing from his son, Mesika called authorities in Israeli and the U.S., including the FBI.

He flew to Miami and told the FBI that a withdrawal had been made early on May 12. Authorities arrested Vernier the next day in Key West.

Shimon Mesika flew to the bayou with 20 of his son's friends, and they have been searching daily for Mesika's body.

Vernier walked away April 19 from the Colorado Correctional Center, a minimum-security prison in Golden with a 13-foot-high fence, said Alison Morgan, spokeswoman for the Colorado Department of Corrections.

After Vernier's escape, Colorado corrections officials contacted federal and state law enforcement officials in Colorado and Michigan, Morgan said.

Vernier has no real ties to Colorado, she said. He was passing through Colorado when he was arrested for car theft in Glenwood Springs, Morgan said.

If the man's body isn't found, up to 70 volunteers are expected to join the search Saturday in the rural area between Lake Charles and the town of Iowa using helicopters, horses and search dogs, Miller said.

Shimon Mesika said he is certain his son is dead.

It doesn't matter to him whether anyone is punished for his son's slaying if he can find the body.

"It's very important in the Jewish religion to find my son," he said. "If (the killer) tells me where my son is, he can go (free)."

More on the story from <http://bodydeal.com/ran/>. See the web site for further details

Ran was traveling with a very large amount of body jewelry, in two suitcases, one DARK blue(MEDIUM) and one black(LARGE). The jewelry was contained in clear, see-thru plastic, divided, tackle box like containers. Some of them may have the logo, "Shimano" on the top. A person other than Ran may now be trying to sell this jewelry. The jewelry is valued at approximately: \$120,000.00.

Shining Light, Inc. and the FBI are requesting help. Please contact them if you have any information.

FBI: cac.sd@fbi.gov

SHINING LIGHT, INC.: 1-877-676-8947 -or- (858) 273-3315

E-MAIL: sales1@sl-us.com



APPROPRIATE LABELING

Last month I had the opportunity to visit Cleveland, Ohio to train with Dave Vidra. I love and admire Dave and always look forward to a little brain exercise that comes with hanging out with him. I was excited to get his feedback on the previous issue of *The Point*, as I felt it was the best one ever.

I asked what he thought of the Nalgene article I wrote and was eager to find out if he used this product. He calmly responded, “Oh yeah, I think they are great but what about proper labeling per OSHA standards? All products dispensed from bulk packaging to smaller dispensers must have proper labeling.”

“Ahh” I screamed as it occurred to me how right he was. “Don’t worry, honey I’ll help you write a follow up article.”

So here it is: OSHA synopsis 29CFR1910.1200 states that all hazardous chemicals must have proper labeling on each and every container that is used by an employee and specific documentation and training must take place in order to use these products.

This occupational safety and health standard is intended to address comprehensively the issue of evaluating the potential hazards of chemicals, and communicating information concerning hazards and appropriate protective measures to employees, which may include, but is not limited to, provisions for: developing and maintaining a written hazard communication program for the workplace, including lists of hazardous chemicals present; labeling of containers of chemicals in the workplace, preparation and distribution of material safety data sheets to employees and downstream employers; and development and implementation of employee training programs regarding hazards of chemicals and protective measures. Under Section 18 of the Act, no state or political subdivision of a state may adopt or enforce, through any court or agency, any requirement relating to the issue addressed by this Federal standard, except pursuant to a Federally approved state plan.

So if we are dispensing products such as Madacide, which is considered hazardous, into Nalgene bottles, it is federal law that they must be labeled with the information supplied by the MSDS sheets relating to the toxicity, flammability, reactivity and specific hazardous warnings.

All the details of this rule are contained in the Hazard Communication Standard, a guideline for employers from the U.S. Department of Labor, which was developed so

that employees who have contact with or are exposed to hazardous chemicals in the workplace have the education and training to use the protective measures necessary to prevent adverse reactions to these chemicals.

It is important that first and foremost we identify all the hazardous materials used, not just liquid, but chemicals of any form, in the workplace and document them and the places they are stored and handled. Then you must educate the staff of your studio about these chemicals, a safe and effective way of dispensing, handling and using them, as well as any adverse reactions that can come from their exposure.

The standard requires the list of hazardous chemicals be a part of the written hazard communication plan and can be added to your Exposure Control Plan. All chemicals used in the shop should already have a Material Safety and Data Sheet on file. No employee should be

allowed to use a chemical that does not have a MSDS sheet on file at the studio. All manufacturers and distributors, by request, must supply MSDS for each product they distribute.

Does the hazard warning on the label have to match the MSDS warning exactly or can it be simplified?

The label must convey the specific hazards of the chemical it contains, i.e., “when inhaled this chemical causes lung damage” so, lung damage is the hazard, not inhalation. Therefore, “harmful if

inhaled” would be appropriate if the target organ effect is unknown.

The MSDS warning diamond of reactivity, flammability, health and hazard number system must be included.

What in my shop can be considered Hazardous?

Learn to read and know your MSDS information. Many household products such as Windex, Whiteout, and Lysol contain hazardous chemicals in small amounts and if used according to “household directions” can cause little to no harm. But, these same products used in abundance in the workplace take on a new definition and must be contained in your hazard communication plan. When in doubt don’t leave it out.

My hopes were to complete this article with a resource for a Madacide label. Unfortunately Madacide doesn’t distribute such a product specifically for this purpose, so I was left to design my own. I did however find some Nalgene bottles that were pre-labeled for distilled water and other chemicals used in shops. They can be found at Consolidated Plastics, Company: 1-800-362-1000.

— Alicia Cardenas



Conference Review

—continued from page 1

had extended hours that helped make shopping convenient for the busy conference-goers.

Throughout the Conference, the Vendor Expo was open daily. There was so much amazing jewelry available, from art glass to implant grade steel and titanium, 14 and 18 karat fancy gold and gemstones, and also natural materials, much of it hand carved overseas. Also present were companies providing piercing supplies and tools, and others offering products and services of interest.

Awards for best booth design and decor were presented by APP President Bethra Szumski to Industrial Strength Needles. Great job! Clayton Limited Editions received the award for best single booth, having super detailed themed, creative displays. Congratulations!

Tuesday's class offerings included a Piercing Techniques class for Members only, and a Jewelry course. In the afternoon we had the usual Red Cross CPR with both the full course and the annual renewal available. We held one Round Table discussion on Indigenous Aspects of Piercing, and one on Medical Device Legality. There was also a class entitled Chemistry 101 and Aftercare, and one on Studio Set-Up and Inspection.

Stamina was needed as the classes continued on Wednesday, starting off with Anatomy 1 taught by a new speaker, Dr. Jeffrey Morehouse, a Plastic Surgeon from Albuquerque. He gave a very entertaining and informative presentation on anatomy of the body as it relates to body piercing. Also, there was a class on Aseptic Technique and Equipment Management. Following lunch was the OSHA/Bloodborne Pathogens Certification and also Round Table discussions including one on Economics and Budgeting, and one on Liability.

The Banquet dinner took place on Wednesday night. Banquets aren't known to be riveting or exciting, but this one may be an exception. There was an audible gasp in the ballroom as the enormous curtains surrounding the room opened to reveal a breathtaking view of Las Vegas through the equally large, panoramic windows behind them. The sun was beginning to set over the desert and it was a genuinely impressive and beautiful sight.

Entertainment at the banquet was exceptional: we had a trio of talented belly dancers who undulated and shimmed through two performances during the evening. They pleased the eye with belly rolls and flutters, hip circles and backbends; and they pleased the ear with expert rhythmic finger cymbals to classic belly dancing music accompaniment. Against the backdrop of gigantic windows and the desert sunset, this DID turn out to be a special banquet evening, indeed! Thanks to Alicia Cardenas for arranging for the entertainment. It was clearly a hit!

Two President's Awards were given this year. One went to Grant Dempsey of Cold Steel UK for all of his efforts on our behalf with the European community, and one to Betsy Reynolds, RDH, for her tremendously sup-

portive work as liaison to the dental community.

Following the meal there were pleasantly brief speeches from the Board Members and the evening was finished up with the rapid drawing of the top 25 raffle prizes. Thanks to our "guest" raffle ticket pickers, too.

Special thanks go out from the APP to the extremely generous vendors who made the entire event possible. The vendors this year truly went way above and beyond the call of duty in their generosity. We had sponsors for the welcome party, coffee cart service in the vendor area, and for the banquet dinner. The vendors really dug deep and provided us with truly tremendous prizes for the raffle, larger and more enticing than ever before.

Extra special thanks to Anatometal for a \$30,000 grand prize in jewelry. Yes, that's not a typo; that was thirty thousand dollars worth of jewelry they donated to the lucky grand prize winner of the raffle! Anatometal also donated an additional prize of \$6500 prize in jewelry. Industrial Strength Jewelry, as always, was right up there with a \$10,000 prize, and 10 prizes worth \$500! Many thanks to ALL the vendors who kept on giving. If they gave 'till it hurt, we hope it "hurt good" because their extraordinary generosity sure did benefit the organization. We had a super successful raffle and send out our heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated: to each and every one of the vendors who donated gifts, and to the attendees for purchasing lots of raffle tickets. Thank you to everyone!

The educational offerings finished on Thursday with a course in Stretching, a new class in Portfolio and Photography, and Betsy Reynolds teaching Oral and Facial Anatomy. After lunch, the classes finished up with Advanced Piercing Techniques for Members. We had a class in Grounding and Bedside Manner, and a first ever: a Basic Techniques class for Non-members. Up until this point ALL techniques classes were available to members only.

Huge thanks also must go out to Caitlin McDiarmid, the APP employee who did the work of 10 while receiving a salary for one. Caitlin can simultaneously do at least 6 or 8 things, and do them all well. What a talent! Thanks for all of your help to make the Conference and Expo fully functional and smooth!

Big congratulations to the happy couples: David and Mrs. Gilstrap, and Luis and Heidi Pingarone, who were married in Las Vegas during conference.

And finally a big thank you to all of the piercers who made the effort, took the time, and, in this tougher economic climate, bore the expense of attending. It was a fun, successful event and we look forward to seeing you again next year.

For those who can't wait a full year, we are going to be hosting the second International APP Conference and Expo in Amsterdam, November 4-7. Check the APP web site for details at www.safepiercing.org.

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It was good to see you in Vegas!



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Thank you for your support! We appreciate all contributions.

Board

—continued from page 7

As Newsletter Editor, I am the first in the history of the organization to produce quarterly issues of *The POINT* for the past two and a half years.

INTERNATIONAL LIAISON: Alicia Cardenas

Since being elected to a board position, I have learned many new things. One of my biggest goals has been international outreach and the international database. The database now contains well over five hundred international piercers.

I staffed a booth at last year's Toronto Bod Mod Convention with Health Educators. There I was able to meet and visit local Toronto studios. There were many studios interested in becoming APP Members.

The Amsterdam conference was a huge success and a large step in uniting our international piercing community not only within itself but also with the American community. There were attendees from South Africa,

The Middle East, Europe, Mexico, Australia and South America. There is so much work to be done in each region on the world, the job of coordinating it all is too large for one American to be doing, therefore many sister Associations have began to develop in the last two years with the help of our Association.

The translation of our brochures, "Picking Your Piercer," "Oral and Facial Aftercare" and "You and Your Healthcare Professional" into Spanish was absolutely necessary, not only for the Spanish speaking piercers around the world but for the American piercers who live in strong multi-cultural areas. With the help of my studio, we represented APP and disseminated information at tattoo conventions around the world including Berlin, Minnesota, Toronto, New York and Seattle. I'd like to thank all the international piercers I have met for helping me understand how piercing is being done all over the world and those who have shown continuous support to our organization.

Comfrey

—continued from page 9

it should never be used on infected areas or with very deep wounds. To do so may result in the surface skin sealing, either trapping the infection or complicating healing of underlying tissue. Make sure to thoroughly clean the area before applying comfrey. Do not use it on serious lacerations unless you are trapped in the woods with no chance of medical attention.

Personally, I have seen comfrey work well for healing blowouts, genital piercings, ill-advised or otherwise annoyed major modifications, and garden-variety cuts. It is something I suggest to clients and friends for torn PAs, swollen hoods and ear stretches that just didn't want to go that far, and anything that needs to seal together, stop swelling and begin to heal now. While eliminating itching and pain, comfrey can also help keep tissues flexible to avoid future problems and scarring (especially important with stretching). Although it should never be a substitute for professional medical attention, I have seen comfrey used successfully for speeding healing of surgical incisions, continued low-grade bleeding, tears and other minor wounds, both on regular skin and on oral and genital tissue.

Most commonly, a client will arrive with a swollen, painful, weepy piercing or stretch, which is not due to infection or allergic reaction, and has not improved with sea salt soaks. After soaking the area in a comfrey infusion, relief of pain is often rapid. General improvement tends to begin within a day or two. Comfrey should never be used long term (for more than 4 - 6 weeks in a year), but a few days' use is generally sufficient to do the job.

Dried leaf is available in most herb and health food stores, and you should take care to buy a product labeled with the Latin name, *Symphytum officinale*, to be sure the

producer distinguished it from Russian or prickly comfrey.

Internal use of comfrey has come under fire from the FDA in the past few years due to comfrey's pyrrolizidine alkaloid (PA) content. PAs are hepatotoxic and have been linked to veno-occlusive disease (obstruction of blood flow from the liver) when administered in concentrated doses to rats. Since 1985, seven cases of liver disease have been associated with the long-term internal use of concentrated comfrey root capsules. However, the FDA reports that, "information is generally lacking to establish a cause-effect relationship between comfrey ingestion and observed adverse effects [in] humans" (2001). To be safe, the FDA and FTC have recommended that comfrey powders not be used in dietary supplements, and not be used internally or on open wounds unless PA-free. However, short term external use and the use of dried leaves in infusion, ointments and creams has not been restricted.

Buy PA-free herbs whenever available, and do not substitute the root or fresh leaf for dried leaf. In dried leaves of *Symphytum officinale* (common comfrey), PAs are either absent or negligible. The problematic components are found predominantly in Russian and prickly comfrey (which may have been used in some of the studies), and in the roots and fresh young leaves of all three varieties. Although they are more effective for wound healing, the roots have about 10 times the PA content of the leaves. Plants grown in areas without real winters (like California) may have higher alkaloid levels as well.

Therefore, if you or your clients decide to try comfrey, use only the dried leaves of *Symphytum officinale*, purchased from a reputable source. Do not use it internally; do not use it on infected piercings. It should only be used for 4 - 6 weeks in a year, and those with liver conditions or cancer or who are pregnant or nursing should consult a physician before using. That said, comfrey is an

effective herbal for soothing blowouts, minimizing swelling and speeding healing all over the body. Use and suggest it wisely.

As always, doing your own research is the best way to form an opinion. You may find the following references helpful. Also check the bibliography of each for additional resources.

- <http://www.create.org/elchai/hlibcomf.htm>
- http://www.dominionherbal.com/Herb_of_the_Month/comfrey2.htm
- <http://www.herbmed.org/Herbs/Herbs69.htm>
- <http://www.purplesage.org.uk/profiles/comfrey.htm>
- http://www.rxlist.com/cgi/alt/comfrey_faq.htm
- <http://www.alternativedr.com/conditions/ConsHerbs/Comfreych.html>
- <http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/afcm/comfrey.html>
- <http://www.ibiblio.org/herbmed/faqs/medi-2-15-comfrey.html> <http://www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/c/comfre92.html>
- <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>
- <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/dspltr06.html>
- <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2001/07/westbot.htm> <http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/UnconventionalTherapies/Comfrey.htm> <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2001/07/chrisenter.htm>

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