

Acupuncture: Knitting the Fabric of Health

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How the East met the West

Even though it is a millenarian medical practice, acupuncture didn't make its debut in modern American medicine until more recent times. A cultural exchange with China promoted by then President Nixon facilitated the meeting between East and West. Diplomats and physicians noticed the effectiveness of this practice by observing the analgesic properties of the therapy during some invasive surgical procedures. Journalist James Reston himself underwent an emergency appendectomy using acupuncture analgesia before, during, and after the procedure which generated an article in the New York Times.

Acupuncture didn't spread in the USA at the time. The whole purpose of the Flexner report was to weed-out these "unscientific" practices. The report successfully supported an organized standardization of medical education under stricter biologic science, and the new emerging science of pharmacology. However, the report eliminated all traditional natural methods without investigating their scientific foundations. A great divide originated between modern medical practice and the traditional styles that slowly disappeared together with lack of funding.

Acupuncture's Growing Pains in the West

The mainstream medical community couldn't find the scientific basis for acupuncture's clinical results according to modern medical sciences. The ying-yang, Qi energy-based system was too primitive for the medical establishment since it did not include any drug-mediated mechanisms. This paved the way for the development of traditional Oriental medical trainings for non physicians, who became Oriental medical doctors (OMD's) to satisfy the needs of patients looking for alternative, non-toxic therapies.

The excellent results obtained by these practitioners, its frequent use by patients, and the rebirth of alternative medicine promoted by Clinton's presidency provided funding for research studies in a special division of the National Institute of Health (NIH). The outpouring of data from experimental and clinical models demonstrated how the needles stimulate the production of skin receptors that generate the natural opioid endorphin-like substances that calm the pain.

Acupuncture Goes Mainstream

This boom in research and the backing of the World Health Organization (WHO) allowed for a worldwide standardization of education for non physicians and physicians alike, and helped the NIH declare medical acupuncture as a field of modern medicine, specially for the management of pain and anesthesia.

The need to standardize acupuncture education as suggested by the WHO inspired a group of physicians to create the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture in 1987, and later to develop a certifying exam under the American

Board of Medical Acupuncture (ABMA.)

Worldwide Research Assures Acupuncture Is Here to Stay

Controlled studies show acupuncture's superiority in the treatment of migraines; back pain; knee and shoulder osteoarthritis; depression; anxiety; gastrointestinal complex diseases such as spastic colon, Crohn's disease, and ulcerative colitis; gynecological problems; menopause and infertility; pain and nausea caused by cancer treatments; insomnia; fibromyalgia; and many others. Less invasive techniques with cold lasers are effective in adults and children.

Health Perspective: East versus West

Modern medicine focuses on the patient as a biologic organism where health is the absence of any disease or impairment, as defined by the World Health Organization.

Traditional Chinese Medicine is the optimal state of the human being based on the genetic potential that allows it to survive in harmony with its environment as it goes through the aging process. This believe relates to the new epigenetic theory of health where lifestyles influence the quality of our health.

Disease Causes in Western Medicine

Except for infectious diseases where a pathogen organism is definitely the cause, the majority of causes for most degenerative conditions are classified as idiopathic or undetermined, or auto-immune responses.

Disease Causes in Eastern Medicine

1. Hereditary tendencies
2. External climate, infectious diseases, and trauma.
3. Emotions (anger, melancholy, sadness, excess joy of bipolar-manic states, fear, and obsessive worrying.)
4. Lifestyles (nutrition, exercise, prudent sexual practices.) We could also conclude they were talking about epigenetics.

How The Needles Knit the Fabric of Our Health

In Eastern medicine, each organism is considered a holographic universe of interconnections bridged by innumerable meridians (channels) that allow the flow of energy or Qi through each portion of the organism. Any alteration caused by the four causes of disease discussed previously will alter the normal flow of energy through the hologram, thus creating imbalances that will manifest as clinical symptoms. The correction of the causes and the use of the needles to knit the loose ends created by the imbalance will rapidly mitigate the symptoms by correcting the disharmony. The experienced practitioner is very effective in correcting the superficial imbalance yet also correcting the root cause of the imbalance so the disease process is eradicated permanently.

Advantages of Acupuncture for the Treatment of Modern Diseases

1. Less need for drugs and less toxic side effects.
2. Can be used in combined programs for drug, nicotine, alcohol dependence, and weight loss.
3. Can provide analgesia for most established conditions.
4. Can be used to diminish the emotional effects associated with many chronic diseases.
5. Can be used to facilitate recovery from traumatic and athletic injuries.
6. Can help patients with anxiety or depression diminish dependency on drugs.
7. The complications rate of its use is almost nonexistent.
8. Can help increase the success of an in vitro fertility treatment.
9. Can be used in the recovery of veterans suffering PTSD syndrome.
10. Is effective in the neurological rehabilitation of cerebrovascular accidents in the early stages.
11. More cost effective than comparable therapies.
12. Can help hospital physicians supporting the recovery of acute conditions.

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