

## Acupuncture: a traditional chinese medicare

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### Introduction

The Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is one of the oldest systems of Medicare to treat ailments which has history of about three thousand years. It includes different therapeutic techniques like Acupuncture, Moxibustion, Tuina & Guasha messages, Cupping, Herbal medicine, Meditation, Exercise and life style change. Among these techniques, acupuncture is the major and most integrated component of TCM. The term “acupuncture” is given in the Western World for treating illness with special needle which is pushed into the skin in a particular part of body. The term is derived from Latin word “Acus” meaning needle and “Punctura” for prick. To the Chinese, Zhe`n bea`n is a practical science of inserting and manipulating needles into specific points (acu-points) on the body with the aim of preventing and treating diseases. It is a drug free process of treatment which encourages the body to promote natural healing. The Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is based on the belief that every organ is connected with each other and work together to keep the body functioning with the help of flow of energy called Qi(chi). It flows in the body via channels called meridians. Imbalance in the flow of Qi (chi) is the reason behind different ailments. In TCM, there is a belief that all things in the universe are persisting in two cosmic regulations known as Yin and Yang. The sum of total Yin and Yang are balanced. It is perceived in TCM that illness caused by an imbalance of Yin and Yang in the body. It is also believed that the balance of Yin and Yang only exists when Qi flows freely through a system of tracts. The disease develops when the flow of Qi is obstructed causing an imbalance between Yin and Yang. It was attempted to get rid of obstruction by inserting needles into these tract which is known to the Western World as acupuncture.

### Global spread and fluctuation in popularity of acupuncture in China

Acupuncture is one of the oldest methods of treatment in the history. The Chinese fast carried

out acupuncture that seemingly a strange practice whereby needles are inserted into skin for therapeutic purpose at least 3000 years ago. News of this however, did not reach the Western World until 300 years ago when European medical officer employed by the Dutch East Indian Training Company in Java saw it being used by the Japanese. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards missionaries from Europe in bringing the Christian religion to China, also brought with them the Western form of medical practice. After that, practice of acupuncture gradually replaced by Western Medicine. Beside this, acupuncture became chaotic due to Japanese occupation, civil war and lack of doctors trained in this type of medicine. In 1882, the emperor of the Qin dynasty commanded all hospital to stop practicing acupuncture. After the Communist revolution in 1949, the Chinese communist leader Mao Tse Tung integrated Western medicine with TCM that both being taught in the medical collages. From that time, most hospital in China offered both form of treatment to their patients. President Nixon visited China in 1972. He was impressed by acupuncture treatment. His personal physician was so impressed that, on returning to America, he generated a wave of enthusiasm that have helped to occupy a vital position beside the Western medicine.



*Herb Shop*



Moxibution

*Tuina (chinese medical massage)**Acupunc Ture & Cupping Mark**Cupping in cervical spondylosis*

### The Concept of TCM

The philosophers and physicians in ancient China believed that the original state of universe was “Qi” (Chi), the most active invisible vital energy, the constant motion of which produces all things in the universe. The accumulation of “Qi” would produces life while the dispersion of “Qi” would put an end of life. The TCM theory is based on this “Law of the Universe”. According to TCM theory- the structural and functional units of the human body achieve two aspects, ‘Yin and Yang’. The Yin and Yang is due to constant motion of Qi. So part of Qi have Yang properties while the other part have Yin properties. The Yin Qi circulates around the body in the blood vessels while the Yang Qi travels outside them in a completely separate system of channels or tracts. Anatomically these tracts are not demonstrable. But to the Chinese, these tracts are very real who believed that the intricate network of channels and tributaries were similar to the rivers and its tributaries and canals which together make up the water ways of the earth. This system of channels or tracts is known as “acu-tracts”. It should be noted that modern Western writers often refer to the Chinese acu-tracts as “meridians”. But many Chinese did not like to accept the term.

The meridians are linear routes run vertically, bilaterally and symmetrically dividing into several levels of branches which are interconnected with each other to form a network. The main function is to transport Qi and blood, through Yin and Yang, connect the organs and to regulate the physiological and pathological functions of the body.

The Meridian system consists of 12 primary meridians, their branches and collaterals along with 08 extraordinary vessels. The human body composed of internal “Zang organ” (Spleen, Heart, Lung, Kidney and Liver) and “Fu organ” (Stomach, Large Intestine, Small Intestine, Gallbladder and Urinary bladder) along with external sensory organs, limbs and skeletal system. So there are only ten principal organs, 5 with Yin characteristics and other 5 with Yang characteristics. Subsequently they included pericardium amongst the Yin organ and San Jiao (triple warmer) amongst the Yang organ. These meridians are functionally dependent on each other and make the whole body as units known as “Wholism”. It is nourished by blood and body fluid through meridians and collaterals circulated by the propelling action of `Qi`. The theory also holds that the normal activity of life results from the balance between Yin and Yang to harmonize the functions of Zang-Fu organs. The Qi move through each of 12 channels comprising an internal (related to Zang–Fu organs) and external (Acu-tract) pathways. According to traditional Chinese teaching, the purpose of inserting needles into acu-points in a disease is to make free flow of Qi in acu-tracts and there by correct the imbalance between Yin and Yang. The Nei Ching in several places says that there are 365 acu-points. A figure no doubt arrived at because of its symbolic association with the number of degree in a celestial circle, the number of days in a year and the number of bones in the human body. Among them only 160 points actually receives names. The acu-points are the spots on the meridians and vessels where Qi and blood from vessels and meridians effuse and infuse in the body surface. To treat and prevent a disease, acu-points are punctured by Needles to balance Yin-Yang character and to harmonize the functions of the organs. Acu-points are usually located in the interstices in muscles or between tendons and bones. One acu-point may be used to treat many diseases and several types of acu-points may be used to treat a single disease. There is no generally accepted anatomical and histological basis for the concept of meridians and collaterals and acu-points. But the modern Acupuncturists tend to view them in functional rather than structural terms.

Twelve primary meridians or channels:

#### YANG Meridians

1. Large Intestine channels (LI)
2. Small Intestine channels (SI)
3. Stomach channels (ST)
4. Gall Bladder channels (GB)
5. Urinary Bladder channels (UB)
6. Triple Warmer (San Jiao Meridian) (TW)

#### Yin Meridians

1. Lung channel (LU)
2. Heart channel (HT)
3. Spleen channel (SP)
4. Liver channel (LR)
5. Kidney channel (KI)
6. Pericardium channel (PC)

#### Extra channels

1. Governor channel (DU)
2. Conception channel (REN)



*Meridians & Acupoints*

#### Mode of acupuncture

There are two modes of acupuncture – Body acupuncture and Auricular acupuncture. While classical body acupuncture was first developed in China over 3000 years ago, its use diminished in the 1800's, when China was dominated by Western

powers from Europe. But it was fortuitous that the discoveries of the ear acupuncture charts by Dr. Paul Nogier of France arrived at this time in a renewed interest in acupuncture techniques. Nogier's inverted fetus picture of auricular points are connected to every parts of the body. Though both ear and body acupuncture had their origin in China, Ear acupuncture differs from the body acupuncture in many ways. The Ear Acupuncture is a self contained micro-system that affects the whole body.

### Pathogenesis

TCM believes that healthy state implies the dynamic balance of Yin and Yang manifested by high coordination and unity between viscera, the meridians, Qi (Chi), blood and body fluid as well as the body and external environment. If it is broken by various pathogenic factors, disease will be caused. The pathologic factors causing diseases are: six abnormal climatic factors, five endogenic factors, seven emotions, improper diets, over works, over rest etc. Healthy Qi fights against pathogenic factors to maintain normal Yin- Yang balance and harmony of organs in normal life. If the healthy Qi is impaired, Yin-Yang balance is damaged, meridians functions are disordered and flow of Qi and blood is stagnated or disturbed.

### Therapeutic Principles

Treatment of disease is attempted by modifying the activity of one or more functions through the activity of needles, pressure, heat, etc. on acupoints. Acupuncture therapy stimulates the meridians to promote free flow of Qi and Blood where there is stagnation and thereby maximize where there is deficiency and drain where there is excess and in this way harmonize the vital activity of the body.

### Indications

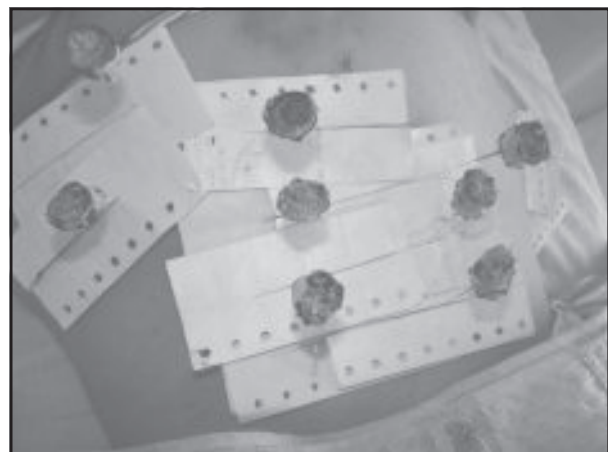
The acupuncture therapy is effective in treating about 300 diseases. Among these diseases, it seems to be particularly effective in treating –

Various chronic pain Musculo-skeletal disorder; Symptomatic relief of all kinds of arthritis; Nausea and Vomiting induced by pregnancy, motion or anaesthesia; Asthma and other allergic disorder of skin; withdrawal of narcotics, smoking or alcoholism etc. Beside these, **FDA approved the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture**

to treat the following diseases with acupuncture:- Abdominal distention/flatulence, Constipation, Diarrhea, Nausea and vomiting, esophageal spasm, hyper-acidity and Irritable bowel syndrome; Acute and chronic pain diseases; Anorexia, Anxiety, fright and panic; Arthritis, Cervical and lumbar spondylosis, frozen shoulder, bursitis, tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome; Cough, persistent hiccups; Premenstrual syndrome, Dys-menorrhoea and pelvic pain; Headache, vertigo and tinnitus; Idiopathic palpitations and sinus tachycardia; Muscle spasms, tremors, tics and contractures; Neuralgias (trigeminal, herpes zoster, post-herpetic); Phantom pain, Planter fasciitis; Post-traumatic and post-operative ileus; Allergic manifestation along with urticaria, pruritus, eczema, psoriasis; Sequelae of stroke syndrome (aphasia, hemiplegia), Seventh nerve Palsy; Severe hyperthermia, Sleep disorders; Sprains and contusions, Tempero-mandibular joint derangement; Urinary incontinence and retention.



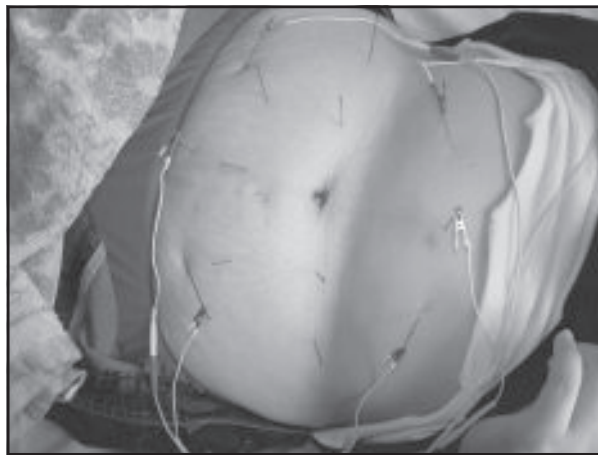
*Cervical and lumbar spondylosis*  
Acupuncture and moxibustion in lumbar spondylosis



*Acupunture in facial palsy*



*Acupuncture in facial palsy*



*Acupuncture with electrical stimulation in obesity*



*Electronic Acupuncture Treatment Instrument*

### Contraindications

There is no specific contraindication for acupuncture therapy. Still it is advised not to perform acupuncture during fasting or overeat, drunken or over fatigued condition; or in

pregnancy, bleeding disorder, infection, ulcer, scars ect.

### Adverse Events

There is belief that acupuncture is completely safe. However, many acupuncturists encounter side effects which are related to direct visceral puncture. Various infection and electrical hazards have also been reported. Beside these, stuck needle, bent needle, broken needle, minor bleeding, haematoma, fainting, nerve injury, pneumo-thorax, pregnancy termination were some times reported.

### Scientific Basis for Mechanism of Action

Some studies suggest that the analgesic action of acupuncture is associated with release of endogenous opioids like enkephalin, endorphin and dynorphin in the brain which modulate pain pathways and this effect can be reversed by using Naloxone. In other word, acupuncture therapy act according to the Gate control theory of pain where it stimulate A b.

### Modern Studies

The research on the meridians or acu-tracts, demonstrated that acupuncture causes a changes of electric current or potential which is conducted directly by the skin. Some other research data also showed that there is a regularity of electric charges between the meridian, collaterals and acu-points. Other research workers think that the meridians and collaterals are the electromagnetic waves formed by electrons or electron beams traveling along these specific pathways. For this reason they applied a high magnetic body to the acu-points for the purpose of regulating the abnormal electric activities of the meridians and collaterals. This is known as "magnetotherapy"

### Conclusion

Acupuncture is cheap, safe and almost without side effect. But it is quiet complex and usually difficult to comprehend. Because the science is based on belief that body is inter-connected. The mind and body are not separated. The vital force that controls the body and mind is Qi. It flows through the meridians. Another important concept of TCM is the theory of Yin and Yang, which is based on belief that all things in the universe are either Yin or Yang. These two aspects are opposite but

complementary to each other, as without Yang, there would be no Yin. Yang is generally associated with bright, warm or motion, whereas Yin is generally associated with dark, cold or still. Illness is caused by imbalance of Yin and Yang in the body.

Acupuncture stimulates a regulatory system of the body eg. Nervous, hormonal and bio-chemical systems to maintain normal Yin and Yang balance and in this way harmonize the vital activity of the body.

**References and further reading:**

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6. Chinese Acupuncture and Moxibustion
7. Chinese Tuina (Massage)