As traditional Chinese medicine evolved over a period of three millennia, it created a unique “human geography” of meridians and acupuncture points. It is only in the last two hundred years that Western medicine has been able to accurately map blood vessels and nerve pathways in the body. Chinese medicine created the first meridian “map” more than two thousand years ago, even predating the era of the legendary Yellow Emperor. Twelve regular acupuncture meridians and eight extraordinary meridians comprise the major energy "arteries" of the human body. Along the meridians, acupuncture points provide specific access to tap into the energy stream.

Chinese medicine practitioners can apply a number of therapeutic techniques to acupoints, including insertion of acupuncture needles, acupressure, moxibustion, electro stimulation, or even hypodermic injection of medicine. Historically, TCM theory postulated a direct connection between meridians and internal organs and tissues which was validated in clinical practice. Modern researchers, using standard scientific methodology, have discovered that acupoints can regulate body fluids and secretions, and that acupoint stimulation has measurable effects on cerebral activity.

Acupuncture meridians weave their way through the body in a sophisticated network, connecting the inside with the outside, the upper part with the lower part of the body, and the left side with the right side. The principal meridians consist of both an external pathway which can be traced on the skin, and an internal pathway which flows through organs and tissues.

As an example, the Lung meridian begins near the stomach and dips downward to connect with the large intestine. Returning, it follows the cardiac orifice, crosses the diaphragm, and enters the lung. Emerging from the area between the lung and the throat, the meridian descends along the anterior aspect of the upper arm and continues down the radial side of the forearm, crossing the radial artery at the pulse and terminating at the tip of the thumb. This trajectory connects the lungs, stomach, large intestine, diaphragm, throat, arms and all body tissues encountered on the way. The Liver meridian connects the liver, gallbladder, hypochondriac area, eyes, ears and fingernails.

These functional connections of the human body were detailed twenty-three hundred years ago in the Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Medicine, the first medical textbook in existence. They are still guiding principles in acupuncture practice today.

(continued on next page)
The invention of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) has enabled researchers to observe the effects of acupuncture stimulation upon the central nervous system. It has been demonstrated that stimulation of an acupoint traditionally used to treat eye disorders will activate the visual cortex of the brain. Stimulation of acupoints traditionally used to treat motor impairment causes activation of the primary and secondary somatosensory areas of the brain. Stimulation of a major analgesia point leads to deactivation in the frontal area of the brain. Many other studies have been completed which consistently demonstrate a measurable connection between acupoints and all areas of the brain.

In the area of chemical research on acupuncture, the discovery that stimulation of acupoints induces the secretion or modulates the activity of endorphins, serotonin, and other endogenous opioid peptides has done much to explain the mechanisms of acupuncture-induced analgesia. Chinese researchers have been exploring biochemical effects of acupuncture for the last fifty years. Results of their research projects include the following correspondences between stimulation of acupoints and a measurable response in the body: Acupuncture at LI 4 (Hegu) and ST 36 (Zusanli) increases the release of 17-OHCS and 17-KS hormones, which relates to acupuncture’s ability to regulate adrenaline. Acupuncture at PC 6 (Neiguan) regulates the heart rate and cardiac rhythm. Acupuncture at ST 36 (Zusanli) affects the movement of the stomach. Acupuncture at RN 12 (Zhongwan) and ST 36 (Zusanli) promotes gastric secretion, while acupuncture at SP 4 (Gongsun), SP 6 (Neiguan) and ST 34 (Liangujii) suppresses gastric secretion. Acupuncture at BL 19 (Danshu) and GB 24 (Riyue) may lead to gallbladder contraction, while acupuncture at LR 13 (Zhangmen) and LR 8 (Ququan) may lead to gallbladder expansion. Just as ancient practitioners mapped the anatomy of meridians and acupuncture points and developed a theoretical basis to explain their functions, so modern researchers, using cutting-edge technology, are establishing a scientifically verifiable map of the functional and physiological effects of acupuncture.

Acupuncture for Facial Rejuvenation

By Hong Chen, TCMD, Ph.D., L.Ac.

People have always wanted to erase years from their face; to look and feel young and slow down the aging process. Legends tell of famous women like Cleopatra who bathed in cow’s milk to retain their youthful skin. Nowadays milk baths have been replaced by shots of Restylane or Botox, and various types of cosmetic surgery. But there does not seem to be a perfect solution. The shots last just a few months. Aggressive types of surgery may have an extended recovery period with swelling and discoloration. Most of these procedures are very expensive, and insurance companies will usually not cover them. But now, more and more people are turning to a less-expensive option to restore a youthful appearance which is both natural and effective: acupuncture.

Thousands of years ago the Chinese discovered that many of the body’s meridians either begin or end on the face, while others have branches which penetrate the face. Acupuncture directly manipulates Qi, as well as promoting the circulation of blood, essence and body fluids. Traditional Chinese medicine theory says, “Where Qi goes, blood flows.” The Stomach and Large Intestine meridians are the primary meridians involved in facial rejuvenation acupuncture. Together, they are called the "Yang Ming" (Bright Yang) meridians. The facial points on the Yang Ming meridians are often located on or near arteries, so it is not surprising that needling these points would bring nourishing Qi and blood to the surface of the face.

A 1996 report in the International Journal of Clinical Acupuncture reported that among 300 cases treated with facial acupuncture, 90% had marked effects with one course of treatment (a course is approximately twelve treatments). The effects included: the skin becoming delicate and fair, improvement of the elasticity of facial muscles and leveling of wrinkles, a ruddier complexion, and overall rejuvenation which was not confined to the face. By promoting Qi circulation and the body’s general level of health, acupuncture addresses the underlying causes of aging. This approach is ultimately preferable to just masking the outward symptoms of aging and allowing further decline and dysfunction to continue within the body. Beauty comes from the inside, radiating from us when we are healthy.

Acupuncture, as an "organic" method of skin care, has promoted health and beauty in human beings for thousands of years. This ancient technique will become the wave of the future in the field of facial rejuvenation.
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The Theoretical Basis of Acupuncture

By Yubin Lu, TCMD, Ph.D., L.Ac.

Acupuncture has been practiced in China for thousands of years and is now being used in every corner of the world as an effective treatment for many conditions. Different from any other therapies, acupuncture involves inserting needles into specific places on the surface of the body (called "acupoints"). Patients are always asking how it works, and although TCM practitioners are completely comfortable with the theory and practice of acupuncture, it is sometimes difficult to explain in terms that a person familiar with Western medicine will understand. Acupuncture springs from a totally different theoretical basis than any treatment modality in conventional medicine.

To answer the question of why we have acupuncture, we need to examine the basic premises and foundational theories of Chinese medicine.

Ancient Chinese philosophy postulates that everything in the world comes from Qi. Qi is defined as something without border or shape that presents itself on the physical and spiritual levels at the same time. It is in a constant state of change and varying levels of aggregation. When Qi condenses, energy transforms and accumulates into physical shape. Qi is both the functional activity of and the energy produced by the internal organs. Its main functions are to transform, transport, support, move, protect, and warm. When Qi is affected negatively, it sinks, stagnates, rebels, or becomes deficient.

Ultimately, it is the movement or action of Qi which creates and maintains all the things in the world. Qi is often translated as "energy," but it could also be thought of as the First Cause of the universe. As it comes into shape, Qi differentiates into all the forms and processes that exist. There can be rock qi, tree qi, tiger qi, or human qi (form). There can be reproductive qi, digestive qi, circulating qi, or thought qi (process). In terms of Chinese medicine theory, while Qi itself is not measurable because it does not have size or shape, we can observe or measure the movement of qi in the body and tell if that movement is harmonious or dysfunctional.

TCM practitioners recognize that the human body is composed of qi and that its functional activities are maintained by the normal movement of qi. When the qi of the body is moving smoothly - in a way that can maintain the normal activities and structures of the body - we will be healthy. If something disturbs or impedes the movement of the body’s qi, such as an invasion of pathogenic factors, some emotional disturbance, inappropriate diet, or local injury/trauma, we will become ill.

On the outside, the human body is surrounded by a field of qi. On the inside, qi moves through the body by a system of conduits called meridians. The meridian system is similar to the vascular and nervous systems: there are principle meridians running through the body, with smaller branches coming off the main meridians and connecting to other meridians, to all parts of the body internally, and connecting all internal parts of the body to the surface of the skin. Different meridians pertain to and connect with different internal organs and travel to different areas of the body, both internally and externally. Acupuncture points are the places on the meridians where qi enters or exits the meridian, and where the qi can be directly accessed. Because the different meridians travel to and support specific internal organs, tissues, and body parts, acupuncture points along a meridian will be able to exert a therapeutic effect on the diseases of the organs or tissues pertaining to that meridian. When acupoints are needled, it is essential that both the practitioner and the patient feel qi sensation in the acupoint, since that is a sign that the qi in the meridian is responding to the acupuncture stimulation.

Acupuncture has proven to be a safe and effective treatment for many conditions. As a therapy, it rests on the philosophical theory of Qi as it has been applied to the practice of medicine. From our perception of Qi as the First Cause, we arrive at the conclusion that the human body is constituted and supported by Qi. Meridian theory naturally follows as the mechanism through which human qi inhabits our bodies and supports our physiological processes. Acupuncture points and their indications for use are part of overall meridian theory. Inserting needles into acupoints is one therapeutic modality for accessing qi via the meridians. As you can see, acupuncture rests on a firm foundation of coherent theory. However, since this theory is so different from the basis of Western medical theory, there is not yet a Western medicine explanation for how acupuncture works, even though it is possible to measure the effects of acupuncture by means of blood tests and fMRI scans. It is interesting to note how this modern quandry follows ancient Chinese philosophy: the effects of Qi can be measured, but Qi itself remains formless.
AAAOM Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Yifan Liu

By Leila Nielsen

Dr. Liu joined the AAAOM faculty team in January, 2009. He maintains a busy schedule, teaching acupuncture and dietary therapy classes, supervising interns, and treating patients in the AAAOM faculty clinic.

L.N.: Why did you decide to become a doctor of Chinese medicine?

Dr. Liu: There were several things. When I was a child in the 1970’s, my grandfather suffered a stroke that paralyzed his left side. A TCM doctor came to our house to treat him, and I was impressed because he helped my grandfather a lot. A little later, my parents were sent from Beijing to northwest China to bring medical assistance to small towns in that area. My father majored in physiology and my mother was a pharmacist who did research into Chinese herbal medicine. My parents gave me a strong example of helping people through medical knowledge. I could also say I was inspired by the legends of the famous doctor of ancient times, Bian Que. He came from a place very close to my hometown in Shandong Province.

L.N.: Did you go to school straight through to acquire all of your degrees?

Dr. Liu: After I got my 5-year degree as a TCMD, I worked in several hospitals while I studied for my Master’s and Ph.D. degrees. I worked at the Jinan Hospital of TCM for three years while I finished my Master’s degree in acupuncture, then worked at the Tianjin University of TCM hospital for an additional three years while I earned my Ph.D. degree in acupuncture.

L.N.: Why did you focus your studies on acupuncture, specifically?

Dr. Liu: I think acupuncture is an important treatment option for patients because it gives them a good first choice. Everybody knows that Western drugs are very strong and often produce side effects which are harmful to the patient. Even Chinese medicinal herbs, although they are less toxic and stressful to the body than Western drugs, can still produce side effects. And when a patient stops taking prescribed drugs or herbs, there can be additional problems. A good example of this is the standard Western medicine treatment of depression. A severely depressed person can be hospitalized and put on five or six different medications. When she leaves the hospital she might decide to discontinue the drugs, and the depression symptoms return. Sometimes patients are so discouraged by this pattern that they commit suicide.

Acupuncture can regulate qi and blood without producing harmful or unintended side effects. If a patient tries acupuncture therapy first, and it fixes his problem, then that is the best option. More and more, research studies on acupuncture show how powerful it can be in affecting the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.

L.N.: What kind of research did you do for your Ph.D.?

Dr. Liu: A lot of my research involved studying the mechanisms of acupuncture therapy on brain disorders. I studied the effect of acupuncture on brain disorders, stroke, and degenerative atrophy. Some research was on the antioxidative effects of acupuncture therapy. After receiving my Ph.D. I did two years of post-doctoral research on combining acupuncture with Chinese herbal medicine to treat brain disorders. In 2008 I was very proud of receiving an award from the Shandong provincial government for my post-doctoral work. The body of research that I worked on with other post-doctoral fellows and Master’s degree candidates was recognized as one of the top ten research projects in Shandong Province. We published 20-30 articles and studies on how acupuncture and Chinese herbs affect brain and endocrine disorders.

L.N.: How do you like it here?

Dr. Liu: Minnesota is a good place. People have been kind and generous to me. I especially like to teach the students here and educate my patients about Chinese medicine. I want to improve my cultural knowledge and my communication skills. It is very true that the teacher improves in the process of teaching.

L.N.: Do you have any future goals?

Dr. Liu: Wherever I live, I want to be both a teacher and a practitioner of Chinese medicine. I am lucky that I can follow both of these challenging and rewarding careers. I want to spread the knowledge and the use of Chinese medicine to people all over the world.
Acupuncture Works!
Tales from AAAOM Student Interns

Jessica Rolfes: As I learned about acupuncture points, I would experiment on myself by needling points I was studying. The first time I needled GB 41 (on the top of the foot), I felt a “propelling” sensation of Qi which immediately made me feel my Qi move - especially my Liver Qi. I quickly named GB 41 the "happy point" because it was so stimulating. Now when I treat patients for Liver Qi stagnation and depression I always use GB 41 (usually in combination with GB 34 and the Four Gates), and my patients specifically ask for the "happy point."

Mona Abdel-Rahman: One day after class I bent down to pick something up and my lower back went into acute spasm. I had injured the area slightly earlier in the week, but now it was so painful I needed help walking. Fortunately, Dr. Tang could see me in the clinic immediately. He put needles in my lower back, but the muscles spasmed again, pushing the needles out. After repositioning the needles Dr. Tang had me stand up and rock my body gently from side to side. As I did that, he threaded two long needles along the back of my left hand in the "lumbar pain points" (Ex UE – 7). As he manipulated the needles in my hand for about two minutes, I literally felt the pain shoot out of my back and disappear. I said, "I feel like dancing!" Dr. Tang said, "No, no - be careful with your back and come for another treatment in three days." Over the next three days the pain returned somewhat, but the second treatment completely cured the problem.

Alan Schroepfer: I saw a 56-year-old woman who had suffered from plantar fasciitis for three years. Walking was so painful for her it was almost impossible for her to exercise. After the first treatment, she had temporary relief from her pain for about a day. The second treatment, including local needling on the feet, furthered the good results by relieving her pain for five days. For the next two treatments, I used ashi (tender) points on both feet with appropriate body points. After only four acupuncture treatments, this patient experienced significant improvement from a condition which had troubled her for three years. She and I are both extremely optimistic that she will experience full relief of her foot pain.

Huang J. Chen: I was with a friend when she sprained her left ankle. The ankle swelled up and was tender, and the pain increased when she tried to walk on it. We examined her ankle carefully and believed there was no damage to the bones. In acupuncture there is a treatment theory that if the area you want to treat is too painful to touch, you can treat the same area on the opposite side, or a similar area on the opposite side. In this case, I looked at her right wrist. I found a tender (ashi) point on her right wrist, close to LU 10 (Yuji). After gently massaging the left ankle, I pressed the wrist ashi point for five minutes and asked her to slowly rotate her ankle. A few minutes later, the ankle felt better to her. The ashi point was also less painful when I pressed it again. I continued to press the wrist point for two minutes every hour for the next few hours. Next morning she called me and said her ankle was completely better when she woke up. In this case, I used acupressure instead of acupuncture, but the treatment principle is the same.

Huyen Doan: I was treating a 50-year-old woman for multiple problems. She had stagnation of Qi and Blood, as well as deficiency of the Liver, Kidney and Spleen. One symptom that bothered her was tinnitus of the left ear. After a number of treatments the tinnitus was improving, but I wanted to open up the circulation of qi to her head by treating the Stomach meridian. I palpated ST 9, which is located over the carotid artery, next to the Adam's apple. On the left side of her neck, the artery was swollen-looking and purple in color - it looked much different from the right side of her neck. I tried needling ST 9 on the left side. Later, the patient told me that the next day, the ST 9 area was even more swollen than before, but there was no pain. By the day after that, the swelling had disappeared and her ear was completely free of tinnitus. When I looked at her neck, the left side now looked even better than the right side.
Dan Stettler: My patient was a woman in her early 30’s. She had no sensation on the left side of her face for two years. She had a history of a brain tumor, which had been surgically removed. Her M.D. believed her loss of facial nerve sensation was a result of the tumor or surgery and had not been able to mitigate or resolve the problem. While the patient had had no sensation, her muscle tone showed no signs of paralysis. Her TCM diagnosis was Qi and Blood stagnation with Kidney yin deficiency. For her treatments, I used local points on the left side of her face, the lower two-fifths of scalp point MS 7 on the right side, and points on her body that would move and tonify Qi. After two treatments the patient reported a "weird" sensation on the left side of her face which lasted a day or two. After four treatments she regained most of the sensation in her lower jaw. After six treatments she had a mild sensation from her chin to her upper jaw. A few days after the sixth treatment she went to the dentist for a cleaning and she could actually feel sensation in her teeth for the first time in years. This patient continued to make steady improvement with further treatments.

Muni Ceulemans: A woman in her late 20’s came in for headaches, which had been bothering her for several months. The headaches were always accompanied by a rush of heat to her face and head. On questioning, I found that the headaches usually occurred between 7:00 – 10:00 p.m. She also mentioned that she had some emotional issues. According to TCM theory, qi circulates through all the meridians every 24 hours. The time frame of her headaches corresponded to the Pericardium meridian. So I decided to try removing heat from the Pericardium by bleeding PC 9, which is on the tip of the middle finger. Using a three-edged needle, I opened the point and pressed blood from her finger. In this technique, you are supposed to bleed the point until the color of the blood changes. In her case, first the blood was dark red, then it got lighter, then it got dark again, and finally it got lighter. As soon as the point was bled, the heat stopped and the headache was gone. Then I went ahead and did a regular acupuncture treatment. The patient bled her own finger a few times at home. She has not had a headache since we did that treatment.

Repositioning a Breech Baby with Moxibustion*

By Qin Chu, TCMD, Ph.D.

About fifteen years ago after I had just graduated from Shandong University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, one day a woman who was eight months pregnant came to my department of the hospital. She said an ultrasound confirmed that her fetus was in breech position. She wanted to have a natural birth, but would probably have to undergo a Caesarian section if the baby remained in the breech position.

After making her comfortable, I applied moxibustion bilaterally to acupuncture point BL 67 (Zhiyin) by holding the end of a moxa stick close enough to her skin to warm it. BL 67 is on the little toe, at the end of the Urinary Bladder meridian. Acupoints at the beginning or end of a meridian are especially powerful to move Qi. My patient felt a pleasant warming sensation from the moxa and said she felt the fetus become more active during the treatment. Next day she reported that the fetus had remained active after the treatment. We repeated this process every day for seven days, and by the end of that time the fetus had turned over and moved into the correct position. Several weeks later she had a normal delivery and was extremely happy. I was also very excited, since this was my first experience in treating a breech baby with moxibustion on BL 67. Later I met with many such cases, and my clinical experiences confirm that this is a simple and effective method to correct a malpositioned fetus. The clinical effectiveness of this technique was presented in The Journal of the American Medical Association on November 11, 1998 (Vol 280, No 18): “Moxibustion for Correction of Breech Presentation: A Randomized Controlled Trial.”

In case you are wondering why I did not use acupuncture along with moxa therapy, or instead of moxa, it is because acupuncture stimulation may have been too strong in this situation, enough to promote premature labor contractions. Moxa by itself was completely effective, and was all that was needed.

*Note: Moxibustion is the technique of applying local warmth to an acupoint by burning a processed form of the artemesia plant (moxa) on or near the acupoint. A moxa stick is made of compressed moxa wrapped in paper and looks like a cigar.
Bian Que is the most famous miracle-working doctor in the history of Chinese medicine. He lived 2400 years ago, and in his desire to help as many people as possible, Bian Que traveled all over ancient China with a group of students, healing countless patients and teaching his apprentices to be superior doctors. On one occasion, Bian Que and his students were traveling through the state of Guo in eastern China. When he saw people praying in temples and shrines all over the district, Bian Que guessed that someone of high rank had died. He was told that the Crown Prince of Guo had passed away that very morning. Going to the royal palace, he encountered the imperial physician, Zhong Zhezi, and asked, "Has the Crown Prince been buried yet?" Zhong Zhezi responded, "No, it's been just half a day since the Crown Prince departed." Bian Que said, "Then please inform the emperor that I, Bian Que, from the state of Bo Hai may have a method to revive the dead Crown Prince."

Zhong Zhezi was amazed when he heard this: "I have read all of the history books and all of the medical textbooks in the imperial library. I know that there has only been one miracle-working doctor from ancient times to now - Qi Bo. He only had to look at a patient to know where the disease was. He cut skillfully along the meridians and collaterals and unblocked the channels. He could regulate the diaphragm and open the body to wash the five organs. Unless you have the same miracle skills, don’t be so bold as to say you can revive the dead Crown Prince. You will be shamed and ridiculed for your pretensions.'

Bian Que looked up at the heavens and sighed deeply: "Zhong Zhezi, you are a frog in a well. Your outlook and experience are narrow and limited. When I treat disease, I discover the real pathology even without feeling the pulse, observing the complexion, listening to the voice, or studying the physical constitution. If you doubt my words, go into the palace and examine the Crown Prince carefully. If there is the faintest breath coming from his nostrils, and if the inside of his thigh is warm, he can be revived." When Zhong Zhezi looked at the Crown Prince again, it was indeed as Bian Que said. He rushed to report this stunning news to the Emperor.

The tale of Bian Que's diagnosis and cure of the "dead" Crown Prince quickly spread throughout the land. Wherever he went, someone would say, "There is the miracle-working doctor who can revive the dead." When Bian Que heard this, he smiled and responded, "I cannot truly make the dead live again. The Crown Prince was not dead, but only in an unresponsive condition. I brought him back to consciousness."

Although Bian Que was modest about his accomplishment, people continued to say that Bian Que "revived the dead." From that day to this, the phrase "reviving the dead" has been synonymous with "miracle working doctor" in China. A particularly skilled doctor is often called "Bian Que revived."

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Treating Asthma with the Seasons in China

By Brian Grosam, TCMD, Ph.D., L.Ac.

During my doctoral internship in China, I had the unique opportunity to witness and participate in a TCM tradition that, up until then, I had only heard stories about from my professors. For the last one thousand years, it has been the standard practice of traditional Chinese medicine to treat asthma patients with acupuncture and herbs on the longest and shortest days of the year (the summer and winter solstices). In Chinese medicine, asthma is diagnosed as both an excess and a deficiency condition. Acute asthma symptoms are caused by an excess of cold, heat or phlegm. Underlying this expression of acute symptoms, there is a deficiency of the lung, spleen or kidney.

The treatment theory, then, is to treat the “excess” during the time of year when asthma is most likely to be in its acute stage (winter), and to tonify the “deficiency” aspects of the disease during the remission stage (summer). On the day of the two solstices, especially on the summer solstice, hundreds of thousands of people all across China flock to TCM hospitals to receive treatment for their asthma.

For me, it started as a typical summer weekday morning as I got off the bus and walked down the crowded street to the front entrance of the TCM teaching hospital. As usual, people were elbow-to-elbow inside the hospital, scrambling to pay for services and milling around in every corridor of every floor of the six-story building. I pushed my way up five flights of stairs, since it was nearly impossible during this time of day to get onto an elevator, making for my base of operations - the hospital’s acupuncture department.

As I rounded the corner to my professor’s office and the department’s treatment rooms, I realized that something completely different was going on. In addition to the usual patients waiting on benches and in the doorways to see their doctors, there was also a very long line of over 100 patients comprised of men, women and children, all holding sequentially-numbered cards. I edged past them to the head of the line where two nurses sat at a table handing out numbers. When I asked my classmate what was going on, he said “We’re treating asthma patients today,” and led me down the hall to the department’s large treatment room.

Inside, a group of doctors and interns had set up an assembly line procedure in preparation for the treatment of all these patients. They handed me a pair of scissors and some rolls of surgical tape and positioned me at the end of the line. At 9:00 a.m. the doors were thrown open and the patients began to surge in.

As each patient entered the treatment room and stepped up to the first doctor, they were instructed to remove their shirt. (Men and women were directed into separate treatment rooms for privacy.) The doctor sterilized several acupuncture points on the patient’s chest and upper back with iodine. The patient then advanced to the next doctor who used a three-edge needle to make several pricks at each of the sterilized acupoints. I found it very interesting that the children were not subjected to the pricking therapy and were only scrubbed with pieces of fresh ginger. Immediately after pricking the points, the third doctor slapped pieces of gauze, saturated with an herbal plaster, onto these points. The herb plaster was a grayish-brown paste which had the consistency of peanut butter. I wanted to know the formula for the herb paste, but the chief professor told me with a smile that it was a "hospital secret." At the fourth and last station, my classmate and I fastened the patches securely to the body with tape.

As the patients left, they were instructed to leave the patches on for up to three days and to return every fifteen days to repeat the entire process two more times.

Besides the cultural aspect of how strong a tradition this still is in China, it was not surprising to me why treatment based on seasonal timing can be so effective. According to TCM Theory and the Five Elements, seasonal climate corresponds not only to pathogenic factors (wind, heat, dampness, dryness, and cold), but also to the internal organs (Liver / Gallbladder, Heart / Small Intestine, Spleen / Stomach, Lung / Large Intestine, Kidney / Urinary Bladder), tissues (tendons, blood vessels, muscles, skin, and bones), sensory organs (eyes, tongue, mouth, nose, and ears), and emotions (anger, joy, pensiveness, sadness, and fear).

Human beings, as a combination of these elements, can help to maintain ourselves according to seasonal changes. This is done by watching what we eat, getting enough sleep and exercise, regulating emotions, dressing appropriately, and whenever possible treating certain conditions in rhythm with the seasons.
Dragon, Phoenix, Tortoise & Tiger Techniques

By Wen Jiang, TCMD, Ph.D., L.Ac.

Many people think that acupuncture is just about tapping a needle into the correct acupuncture point. While point selection and location are key elements in a successful acupuncture treatment, it is also important to employ the most effective needling technique when inserting the needles. The same point, needled with different needle manipulation techniques, can bring about very different effects. The following four needling techniques give some idea of the range of needling techniques available to the acupuncturist. These techniques were developed many years ago, and are given animal names so they are easier for students to remember and use.

"Green Dragon Swings Its Tail" (Qing Long Bai Wei): This technique is primarily used to direct the needling sensation into the diseased or painful area. The needle is usually inserted distal to the affected area, on the same meridian that passes through the affected area. For example, if a person had shoulder pain in an area traversed by the Small Intestine meridian, a Small Intestine meridian point on the arm would be selected for needling. The needle is inserted obliquely, pointing toward the affected area. As soon as the patient feels a Qi sensation, the needle is tipped even more toward the affected area, and shifted back and forth, from left to right equally, like a dragon is gently swinging its tail. This will produce a sensation for the patient that the needling sensation is traveling from the needle point along the meridian to the affected area. Once the needling sensation reaches the affected area, the practitioner can stop manipulating the needle and leave it in position. I have found that this technique can stop pain immediately when applied to a painful area.

"Red Phoenix Meeting the Source" (Chi Feng Ying Yuan): This technique is generally applied to the locally painful area, as opposed to distal needling. It is designed to intensify and retain the Qi sensation in the affected area. The "red phoenix meeting the source" technique is so named because of the movements made by the practitioner’s hand when manipulating the needle. After inserting the needle perpendicularly, the practitioner rotates, thrusts and lifts the needle to get the Qi sensation, then uses the thumb and index finger to rotate the needle handle quickly. These two motions are alternated and repeated quickly. As the practitioner lifts, twirls and releases the needle, the fingers of his hand resemble the fluttering of a bird's wing. This technique produces very comfortable sensations around the needled areas for the patient. This technique is usually used for cold stagnation, such as arthritis caused by damp-cold invasion. It warms the meridian and removes cold stagnation from the body.

"Green Tortoise Probing Cave" (Cang Gui Tan Xue): This technique is generally used to treat pain that is not superficial, but felt deeper in the body (for example, sciatic pain). It is designed to find the exact location of the pain, promote Qi sensation, and keep the sensation going. The needle is inserted to the indicated depth and manipulated by thrusting or rotating until the patient feels the Qi sensation strongly. Then the needle is lifted to a more shallow level, reoriented, and thrust to the deeper level again. This process is repeated several times. The action of the needle is compared to the nose of a tortoise, as it probes around its underwater cave. If applied properly, this technique will rapidly relieve deep pain.

"White Tiger Shaking Head" (Bai Hu Yao Tou): This technique is used principally to promote the circulation of Qi, more than to relieve pain. The needle is first inserted deeply to obtain Qi sensation. The practitioner then lifts/withdraws the needle slowly, twirling or shaking the handle of the needle as he simultaneously moves the needle in semicircles, from right to left and back. This motion is even more effective if coordinated with the patient’s breathing. First the patient breathes out as the needle is shaken in a semi-circle from right to left, then the patient breathes in as the needle is moved from left to right. The needle is withdrawn slowly, and the needle hole is left "open" (not closed with a cotton ball). This technique is excellent to clear heat, drain fire, eliminate wind and dissolve phlegm, so it is most often applied to disperse excess conditions.

Needling LI 4 (Hegu) to relieve pain and move Qi.
AAAOM Open Houses

Open Houses for prospective students will be held on March 21st and March 28th from 2-5 p.m. Read more on page 3, visit AAAOM.edu for full details and to RSVP, or call 651-631-0204 ext. 2 with any questions and to RSVP. We hope to see you there!

First Day of Summer Trimester

The first day of classes for 2010’s Summer Trimester will be Monday, April 26th. Applications are now being accepted and prospective students are encouraged to register soon. For application information, visit AAAOM.edu or call 651-631-0204 ext. 2.

Tai Chi and Healing Qigong Classes

AAAOM offers ongoing 12-week Tai Chi classes on Wednesdays from 6 to 8:30 p.m. beginning April 28th and 10-week Healing Qi Gong classes on Thursdays from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. beginning April 29th. For class and registration information, please call 651-631-0204 ext. 1.

Continuing Education Seminars - Fall 2010

Held at our Roseville, Minnesota campus each fall, the AAAOM Continuing Education program is available for practitioners who have completed an accredited degree program for Acupuncture and/or Oriental Medicine, or for advanced students. Generally, these courses qualify for CEU credit, and full details are provided upon class registration. Topics and dates are available online at AAAOM.edu on the Continuing Education page. For more information call 651-631-0204 ext. 2.