

**TRADITIONAL CHINESE
MEDICINE**

**CHINESE HERBS
ACUPUNCTURE**

an overview

**EDUARDO AVERSANO, L.Ac., Dipl. C.H.,
D.O.M (CHINA)**

ACUPUNCTURE

The use of fine needles at specific points on the body surface to restore or maintain health is an ancient medical system which originated in China and has been revived and developed to become one of the most sophisticated and advanced forms of treatment for a wide range of disorders.

Acupuncture is now practiced throughout the world to provide safe and effective relief for a variety of illnesses ranging from arthritis, asthma, and anxiety states, through headaches, migraines, and menstrual disorders, to sinus problems, skin rashes, stomach troubles, and the vague states of exhaustion and poor health which often have no clear medical explanation.

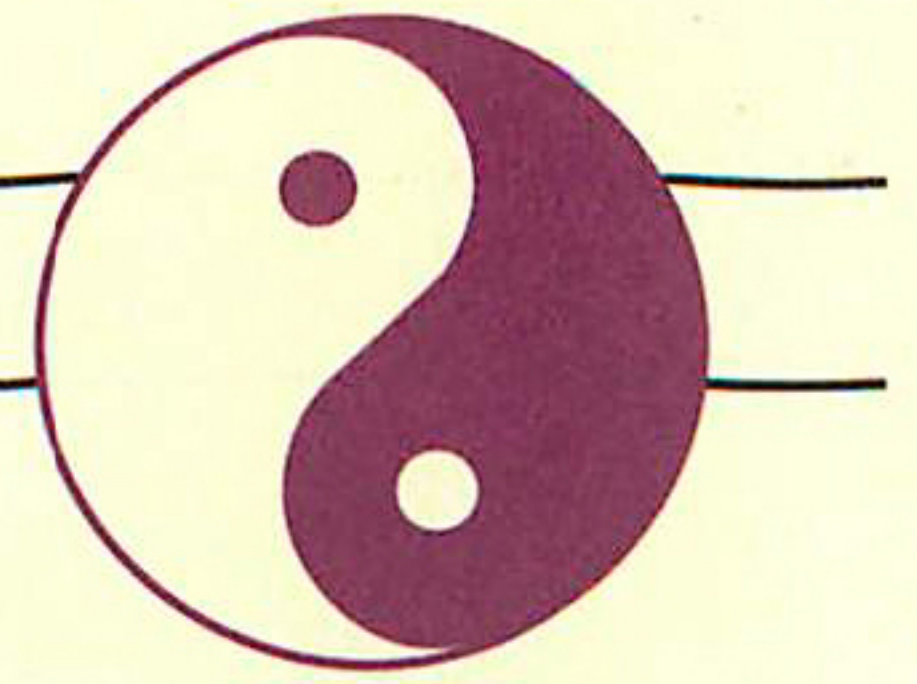
“Acupuncture” is a western word meaning “needle piercing,” which is the principal method of treatment, but the term used in China, where it is extensively practiced, is *Chen chiu*, which means “needle-moxa.” Moxa is a dried herb which is burned in small cones on the skin or on the handle of the needle to generate a gentle heat in a method known as moxibustion.

ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT

Acupuncture needles are so fine that there is no discomfort when they are inserted, but a slight tingle, known as the needle sensation, may be experienced. They are either withdrawn immediately or left in for up to 20 or 30 minutes, during which time there may be a heaviness of the limbs and a pleasant feeling of relaxation. The moxa is burned on, or held near to the point, and removed when the patient feels that it is becoming too hot. This process is repeated a number of times.

Other methods of treating acupuncture points include massage and tapping or pressure with a rounded probe, techniques which are particularly suitable for children or for people who have genuine fear of needles. Also suitable for these cases are two of the modern developments, electro-acupuncture and laser treatments, in which the acupuncture points are stimulated either by a low-frequency electrical current, applied direct with a probe, or with finely tuned laser beams. Gentle electrical stimuli may also be applied through the needles, giving a sensation of tingling or buzzing.

THE ORIGINS OF ACUPUNCTURE



Acupuncture is part of a system of medicine that has been practiced in China for several thousand years, which includes herbal medicine, dietary therapy, and manipulation. Records of its use in many parts of the East can be traced back more than 2000 years.

Treatment probably originated with massage of tender points on the body and as these were found to relieve remote disorders the theory of the channels was gradually evolved. Later, crude needles made of bamboo and stone were used. Gold and silver needles have been found among the personal effects in the tombs of ancient emperors but the modern acupuncture needle is a very fine precision instrument of stainless steel.

The theory and practice of acupuncture were recorded in ancient texts, the most famous of which is the *Nei jing su wen* or Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine. This sets out the fundamental principles upon which even today's complex and sophisticated system of treatment is based.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Since the healing benefits of acupuncture became more widely known, efforts have intensified both in the Western world and the Far East to find out how it works. One of the most interesting discoveries is that stimulation of acupuncture points induces the release of morphine-like substances by the brain. These are known as endorphins and have pain-relieving properties, which may explain why acupuncture has been used so successfully as an alternative to anaesthesia in many surgical operations.

The advantages of acupuncture, however, extend far beyond its pain-relieving properties. The endorphin theory cannot yet explain why treating some combinations of points can affect the functions of the liver and gallbladder, while others may restore the natural balance of a woman's menstrual cycle, or help some cases of infertility, and yet others alleviate a dry wheezy asthma, or an irritating skin rash.

Most practitioners, who are accustomed to treating a wide variety of acute and chronic disorders, find the theories of traditional Chinese medicine a more satisfactory explanation. These are a complex but perfectly rational set of rules, carefully developed through many centuries, by which the patient's disharmony may be diagnosed and the appropriate treatment selected.



TRADITIONAL THEORY OF ACUPUNCTURE

Traditional Chinese medicine is based on the principle that our health is dependent on the balanced function of the body's motivating energy, known as *Qi*. *Qi* flows throughout the body but is concentrated in channels beneath the skin, known as the meridians.

There are 12 pairs of meridians, connected by deeper pathways with 12 organs or functions, and a further two single meridians passing up the front and back of the body. Along these channels lie the points by which the acupuncture regulates the energy flow and bodily health.

The acupuncture channels are a quite separate system from the nerves, blood vessels, and lymphatic ducts, and, although they do not appear to have any definable anatomical structure, the points can be detected with electronic instruments. There are over 600 points on the main channels and many extra ones on other areas, such as the ear, which the practitioner may use. Usually only a few points are treated in a single session.

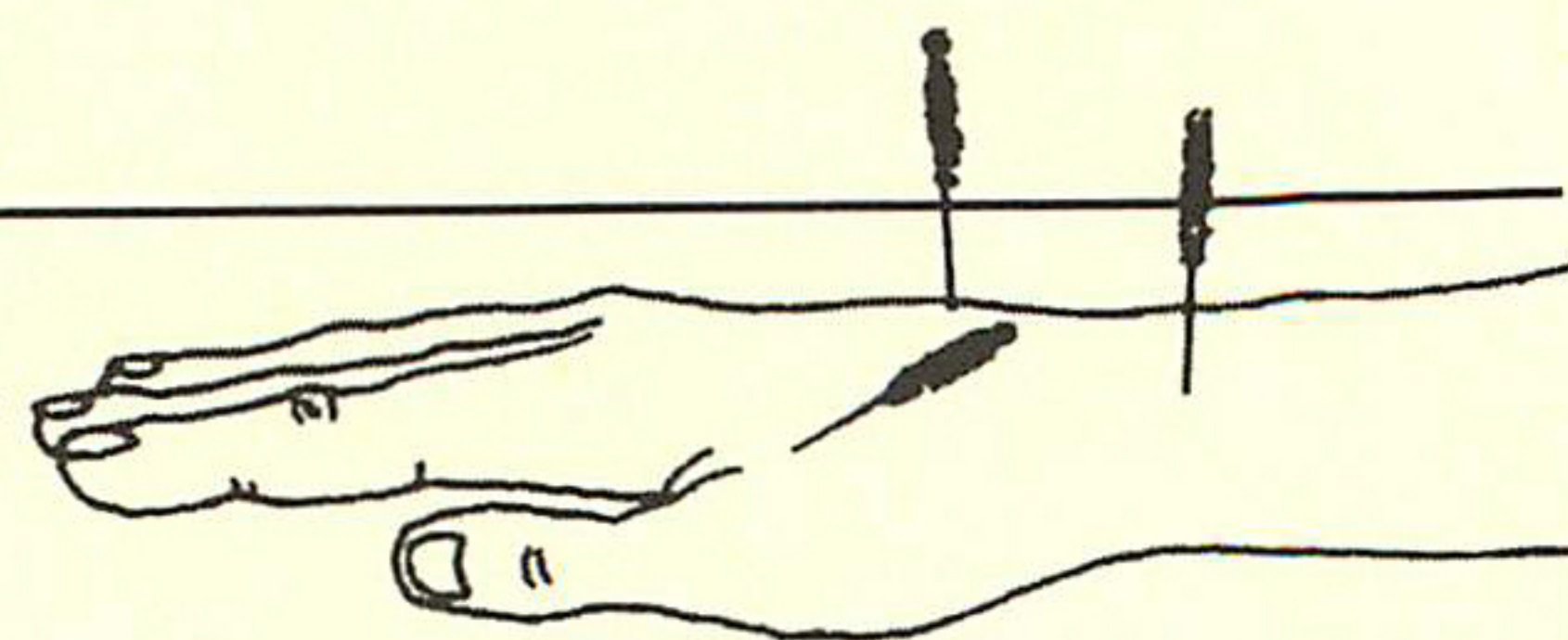
THE OBJECT OF TREATMENT

The aim of treatment is to restore the harmony between the equal and opposite qualities of qi, the *yang* and *yin*. Yang energy represents the aggressive principle — light, heat, dryness, and contraction — while yin is characterized by receptivity, tranquility, darkness, coldness, moisture, and swelling. The terms mean literally the sunny and shady side of a mountain.

In the body, excess yang may be experienced as acute pain, inflammation, spasms, headache, and high blood pressure. A yin dominance might be felt as dull aches or pains, chilliness, fluid retention, discharges, and fatigue.

These traditional concepts are still applicable to modern practice, and research is proving the observations of the ancient physicians to have been remarkably accurate. In the *Nei jing*, for example, the yang energy is said to be stronger in the morning, and modern physiology has shown that the levels of male hormones in the blood are higher at this time.

Apart from its pain-relieving and relaxing effects, acupuncture treatment, by restoring the balance of the energy system, enables the body's self-healing mechanism to work more effectively.



DIAGNOSIS

Acupuncture practitioners try to determine the nature of the disharmony in the body by careful questioning and observation of the patient. The character and onset of the symptoms and the patient's responses to climatic change, taste preferences, feelings, and phobias can all be useful pointers to the imbalance.

The tongue will always be inspected for its structure, color, and coating and the pulses are felt for their quality and strength. The acupuncturist can distinguish between the quality at six different positions on each wrist pulse to determine the state of the 12 main meridians.

Having decided on the cause of the problem, the points and the appropriate method of treatment are then selected according to various rules governing the movement of the energy, which may take account of the daily and seasonal variations to which it is subject.

IS ACUPUNCTURE SAFE AND HYGIENIC?

Acupuncture is a very safe form of treatment when administered by properly qualified practitioners. There are, of course, potential risks in treatment without a correct traditional diagnosis and also in the use of needles or moxa over anatomically unsuitable points. This is why the N.C.C.A. attaches equal importance to a thorough knowledge of the concepts of traditional acupuncture as well as western anatomy, physiology, and diagnosis. Nevertheless, acupuncture is a self-sufficient system of medicine.

Practitioner members of the N.C.C.A. also have to use needle sterilization techniques approved by the Government's Department of Health. These are considered to be completely effective against the hepatitis and AIDS viruses. Many practitioners use disposable needles.

CHINESE HERBAL MEDICINE

Traditional Chinese Medicine's primary concern lies in attempting to bring harmony to the human being. This ancient system of medicine including its herbal techniques is about the energy (Qi) of human life. Diseases represent disbalance and disharmony of the energy. This takes the form of physical, mental, and emotional problems.

Chinese herbology is about combining herbs in a prescription that balances and matches the configuration of energy that each patient encompasses.

Herbal medicine in China is at once a traditional medicine, and yet one that continues to grow. It utilizes the past while it incorporates innovations based on clinical experience and scientific investigation.

The diagnosis and treatment principle is the same as with acupuncture but instead of needles, herbs are used. Chinese herbs are very efficient in chronic problems.

EDUARDO AVERSANO, L.Ac., Dipl. C.H.

- Graduated from New England School of Acupuncture/Boston, 1982 and from Asian Institute of Oriental Studies in Chinese Herbal Medicine, 1988
- Certified in Oriental Medicine by the International Acupuncture Centre, Dongzhimennei, Beijing (China)
- Studied and worked with many Doctors of Chinese Medicine including: James Tin Yau So and Ted Kaptchuk in the United States, and Zhou Yunxian, Cheng Xinnong, Guo Xiao-Zong, and Dr. An in China
- Studied Kampo (Japanese acupuncture) in Tokyo with Dr. Matsumoto, and Shiatsu with Sensei Masunaga in 1977
- Practiced dietary therapy with Dr. Li Yang in China
- Practiced for 25 years at the Pain and Stress Relief Clinic of Lemuel Shattuck Hospital in Boston and in private practices in Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the Hamptons (LI)
- Lectured and taught around Europe since 1986

COMMON PROBLEMS

Conditions that show significant improvement in response to Chinese Medicine (acupuncture and/or Chinese herbs):

Ear, Nose, Throat

Sinusitis
Tinnitus
Nerve Deafness
Sore Throat

Gastrointestinal

Colitis
Abdominal Distention
Diarrhea
Stomachache
Ulcers

Gynecologic & Genitourinary

Dysmenorrhea
Premenstrual Tension/Cramps
Cystitis
Fibroids & Cysts
Uterine Bleeding
Leukorrhea
Menopause

Physical Injury

Acute Sprains
Sports Injuries

Musculoskeletal

Arthritis
Low Back Pain
Bursitis
Tendinitis
Neck Pain

Neurological

Headache, Dizziness
Neuralgia
Shingles
Bell's Palsy
Post-Stroke Syndrome

Psychiatric

Anxiety
Nervous Tension
Depression
Insomnia

Skin Disorders

Acne
Dermatitis
Eczema
Psoriasis

Respiratory

Asthma
Emphysema
Bronchitis
Allergies

Miscellaneous

Eating Disorders
Edema
High Blood Pressure
Thyroid Problems
Blurred Vision
Excess Sweating

