

## **Integrated Acupuncture Therapy For Body and Mind**

By Leon Hammer, MD

First published in the American Journal of Acupuncture, Vol. 8 No. 2, 1980

*Abstract: This paper demonstrates the profound interrelationships between different parts and systems of the body, especially mind and body for which there are practical diagnostic and therapeutic procedures now in existence but unknown to Western medical practitioners. Using the medium of a detailed case study, it is demonstrated how Chinese medicine elucidates and uses these systems. The conclusion from the treatment and analysis of this patient's condition (and many others) using the model of Chinese medicine is that this therapeutic approach offers Western medicine a systematic, practical diagnostic and treatment tool for the large majority of patients whose problems fall within the purview of psychosomatic medicine.*

I believe that unfamiliarity with the field and its underlying concept of "energy" should not interfere with the basic goal of providing a sense of the process and its contribution to a more integrated medicine.

### **The Patient**

The patient, whom we will call "H," is an attractive 19-year-old, white, redhaired girl of athletic build, somewhat overweight and on the masculine side, with wide shoulders and narrow hips. She was referred by her mother who had previously been a patient. The presenting problem was pain in the left knee, with swelling and tenderness. Seven or eight years ago the patient had an accident with her left leg at which time the knee became swollen. Since that time it has always been slightly painful, and the pain was exacerbated upon other falls. Approximately six months prior to the first visit the patient had had another fall in which her knee and leg were again bruised. Two months before the first visit her knee again began to be painful, swollen and tender. At the time of the first treatment she was barely able to walk.

Pertinent history is a chronic recurring ear infection on the left side with simultaneous gastrointestinal discomfort. Both are associated with anxiety. There had been a tonsillectomy at an unspecified age.

### **Reading the Pulse**

At the initial examination her pulse rate was 68. There was some change in the Rate at rest and some change in the Intensity. There was a Tense quality in the Liver and Gall Bladder positions and stagnation between the Liver and the Heart. Her tongue was swollen and dry with mucus and a tremor. Her eyes showed no abnormalities. The palms of her hands had a blue color and blue lines. The left knee was swollen and tender. My initial impression, apart from the problem of the knee, was that the patient was a moody and perhaps somewhat depressed person with a considerable amount of repressed anger. The reason for this impression is based on the following: Changes in pulse rate at rest, especially in a rate that is not particularly fast, are indicative of a person who is somewhat moody and depressed and who is probably very worried and unstable emotionally. These emotional problems affected the Liver, which in turn was affecting the rest of the gastrointestinal system. Later examinations tended to confirm this instability of mood since the rate actually would change considerably from one time to another,

being at some points as low as 58 and others as high as 84 with rates in between of 70, 74, 60, and 68. In addition, there were changes in Intensity, which indicate two things. One, the condition of her body is in a state of flux; the pathology is not yet fixed. Two, there is evidence of emotional disturbance.

In subsequent readings there was Pounding of the entire pulse, especially on the left side. This pounding reflected her inner tension and its effect on the nervous system. Pounding could also come from poor body condition. A poor body condition is usually accompanied by "heat" in the eyes and tongue. In her case the eyes revealed little or no "weak heat" and the tongue showed no "heat" in its deeper parts. "Weak heat," in contrast to "strong heat," refers to "heat" in the body due to a chronic disease process in which the organ systems are worked beyond their energy capacity. Like an engine in a car which is working beyond its ability, the body with a chronic disease process will tend to overheat. Both require fluid. In humans this is provided by the Kidneys. Initially, the Kidneys can keep up with a rising demand, but as a person becomes older and time passes, the energy of the Kidneys weaken, the "heat" is not balanced by the water, and the signs of the "heat" are manifested in the eyes and tongue. The patient H. was only 19 years old. Apparently this condition had not yet set in, though it would be predictable.

### **Acupuncture Therapy**

Let us examine the problem for which H. presented herself in the light of her overall body condition. We noted a Tense quality in the Liver and Gall Bladder pulses. The Liver and the Gall Bladder, in Chinese medicine, are organs related to the wood element which controls ligaments and tendons. Their functions are intimately interrelated. If the Liver and the Gall Bladder are tense, the ligaments, tendons, and muscles also become tense. This creates a negative feedback situation because the tense muscular condition reinforces the original emotional tension. This is why so many autogenic or biogenic exercises are directed toward the relaxation of muscles, ligaments and tendons. If you relax the body, you relax the mind.

In this case we have a situation where there is an organ system of the body which is constantly feeding tension into the body. This is an extremely important point to which we will return for further consideration. In addition, the Liver recovers the qi, or energy. It is also in Western medicine the detoxifier, the cleanser. If the Liver is not working properly, there will be bad energy. According to Chinese medicine, the bad energy will escape outside of the normal energy pathways to those paths of the body which are weak or stagnant either due to constitutional weakness, unhealthy living or trauma, and it will cause pain. Tension, according to Chinese medicine, will also generally inhibit circulation. When this occurs, those vulnerable areas will experience further impairment and pain. We see that the patient's overall condition plays apart in the difficulty in recovering from musculoskeletal trauma.

Fortuitously, many of the important points treated around the knee are gall bladder points, and one in particular, Gall Bladder 34 (Yanglingquan) is the master point for tendons and ligaments in the entire body. GB-34 is also the He-sea point. According to a branch of Chinese medicine based on the functions of the five Shu points, the He point of a meridian when needled will directly affect the related organ. Needling the Gall Bladder points around the knee indirectly affects the Liver since the Gall Bladder and the Liver energies are closely integrated. We did other Gall Bladder and Liver points as well during the first treatment. Using these points and two special knee points, the knee was completely asymptomatic after three treatments.

At this time the patient began to experience a sore throat, and shortly after that her ear began to hurt. In the ensuing weeks the ear began to run, she experienced severe stomach pain and indigestion, followed by a cold with congestion and a considerable amount of discharge.

These developments follow the principle of Chinese medicine that if the treatment is successful, the patient will temporarily re-experience old illnesses which have not been completely resolved. Infections in the throat and ear from which she had suffered over the years had been treated primarily with antibiotics, which tended to suppress the symptoms, kill the bacteria involved, but of course did nothing to the terrain on which the bacteria thrived.

H. gave as part of her history, that when she had ear problems she also had Stomach problems. We described the tongue in the beginning as being swollen, with dry mucus, and having a definite tremor. This suggested a problem with digestion, because of the mucus, the swelling and the dryness. When digestion is poor, the Stomach, which normally produces mucus, will increase the rate of production. Using the energy of the Spleen the mucus will rise to the Lungs which "digest" it into saliva. If too much is produced, or if the Lungs are weak, there will be an excess of mucus and a lack of saliva.

This will show itself on the tongue, usually through a thickening of the top layer and dryness, which may sometimes take the form of a "furred" tongue. According to Chinese medicine the swelling may be due to the inability of the Spleen to perform its normal task of moving and directing fluid. If this function is impaired, we have a tendency toward non-pitting edema.

The tremor was indicative of some problem with the nervous system, most likely emotional in origin, meaning that the nervous components rather than parenchyma of organs were involved. The palm of the hand showed blue color, indicating involvement of the Liver (also emotional), and blue lines which indicate emotional shock.

During the second examination I noted that the tongue had become coated white. Though initially the eyes were normal, there was now some weak heat. The former indicated to me that the patient had been invaded by cold, through her Lungs. This was borne out on the third visit, when she came with a sore throat.

At this time, we did the Gua Sha, and cupping, both techniques for removing cold from the blood and body. The response was strongly positive. At this session the pulse rate change was somewhat less though the rate itself was a little faster. The left side of the pulse was more balanced and the right side (Lung, Stomach and Bladder) was Pounding. The Lung pulse was a little Floating and there was some Vibration on the Stomach, indicating that the cold had gotten into the Lungs and that the Stomach was distressed. In a situation where the gastrointestinal tracts were in order, the Lung, if it were not weak in its own right, would ordinarily be able to handle the cold and dissipate it, but with the Stomach overloading the Lung with mucus, the Lung is hard put to function normally and exercise its normal ability to handle the cold. The cold creates further stagnation of circulation and allows the ever-present bacteria digesting the mucus to accumulate waste products. They cannot be eliminated, and the elements of the immune system which are related to dealing with infection cannot perform adequately when circulation is impaired. The body will discharge these toxins. Involvement of the ear in this accumulation may be due to weakness and impaired circulation from a constitutional deficit from early trauma, such as the use of forceps in delivery. The forceps theory is a good one in this case, inasmuch as her infections started at a very early age.

It should also be pointed out that there are gastrointestinal points all around the ear: Small Intestine, Gall Bladder, and particularly the San Jiao. This last meridian is responsible for the movement of energy from one area of the body to the other and particularly from the different

parts of the stomach to other organs such as the Lung, Heart, Kidney, and Spleen. The San Jiao meridian is extremely important to all ear functions, especially through the points SJ-3 (Zhongzhu), SJ-17 (Yifeng), and SJ-21 (Ermen). It is noteworthy that the gastrointestinal meridians (Stomach, Small Intestine and Large Intestine) all pass from the thorax to the face through the neck, with the Stomach meridian being most anterior, the Large Intestine lateral, and the Small Intestine meridian most posterior so that symptoms of sore throat may not be surprising in view of the gastrointestinal difficulties. The relationship between digestion and infections of the upper respiratory tract, in particular the ear, is not apparent in Western medicine. If however, we think in Chinese and naturopathic terms, we realize that there are significant relationships.

During the second visit I began to treat her with the needles for emotional tensions as well as for her knees. The third session evoked a very powerful emotional reaction. The patient trembled and cried and there seemed to be a considerable amount of grief and much release of tension. Points used on this occasion were on the back, the Shu points or associated effect points which go directly to the organ. (The points used went to the Lung, to the diaphragm, Liver and Stomach. In addition I used L.I.-4 (Hegu), San Qiao points SJ-3 (Zhongzhu), SJ-17 (Yifeng), and two points which particularly help the throat when used in conjunction with each other: L.I.- 7 (Wenliu), and KI-6 (Zhaohai). The throat grew immediately worse and then recovered rather quickly the next day. The patient also recovered emotionally by the next day.

The gastrointestinal and ear problems coincided as they had done many times in the past. As soon as the ear cleared up, the stomach became worse. H. was given nutritional counseling after a review of her eating habits. She was given sweet rice, ginger, red date and Wei Shen and a Chinese proprietary herb called Weisen-Yu, all of which are medicinal to the gastrointestinal tract. The cleansing diet primarily consisted of the sweet rice, the herbs mentioned, and the elimination of all toxic foods. There was an immediate period of discharge and then an increased feeling of well-being, despite H.'s tendency to mistreat herself through inadequate rest or excessive work. L.I.-4 (Hegu) and LIV-3 (Taichong) were particularly important at this stage. L.I.-4 is the great eliminator of both mental and physical toxicity. It is the source point of the Large Intestine. LIV-3 is the Liver source and earth point and is very effective for relaxing the Liver and eliminating heat; especially if the needle is passed through toward KI-1 (Yongquan) at the bottom of the foot. These two points by themselves, with the needles left in for a considerable period of time, are generally very relaxing and act as an anti-depressant.

The eighth, ninth and tenth sessions showed increasing Vibration on the entire pulse, which indicated that the patient was feeling guilty, afraid and worried. She had just returned from a visit to her home. By reading her pulse I presented this impression of her emotional state and for the first time she began to talk about herself. Up to this time there had been very little verbal exchange on a psychological level or personal level. The one outburst of emotion following the third treatment was not followed by any verbal cathexis. For the last five sessions we were able to talk, discuss some of her problems, particularly her problem of low self-esteem and its relationship to her social life, especially with members of the opposite sex. This is an extremely important thesis. One can from the pulse and face reading tell a great deal about a person's emotional state, past, present and future. Somehow the experience of being presented with this material directly from the pulse seems to bypass the long struggle people experience in revealing themselves to a therapist. The personal resistances almost universally encountered in psychotherapy do not emerge and material which might take months or years to work through

may sometimes be resolved in days or weeks. This is most true for the patient coming initially with a physical problem and least exposed to previous psychotherapy.

## Discussion

There were 13 sessions altogether, and from the 10th session on, the patient reported no problems of any sort. The pulse tended to stabilize in terms of rate changes, Intensity, and Vibration, though at the end it was a little fast and a little Pounding since she had taken a job as a lifeguard and was clearly overworking and overexposing herself to the sun. This was creating heat in her blood. Her tongue had considerably less mucus. All the white had disappeared. It was still a little dry and the small amount of weak heat in the eyes had diminished considerably. The blue lines in her hands, however, remained. Under the mucus one discovered on the tongue a thin line, running longitudinally. The tongue itself appeared somewhat pale as the yellow coating disappeared. This, together with the line, was indicative of an underlying constitutional weakness in the energy of the Heart.

There was then this evidence that she started out life with some weakness in the energy of her Heart. Since the Heart is considered the emperor and the spirit of the body, such weakness in its energy would leave her somewhat weakened and most certainly overly sensitive to anything affecting the spirit. (We also know from Chinese medicine that the Heart tends to control the throat and tongue. Here as a child she experienced a good deal of difficulty in terms of sore throats, tonsillitis and later ear infections coinciding with her Stomach problems). Diagnostically we begin with a person who is physically and emotionally vulnerable because one of her organ systems is constitutionally weak. However, it is a principle in Chinese medicine that vulnerability becomes manifest disease only as a result of the combination of more than one problem and not from simply one source. Constitutional vulnerability is not enough.

With an extreme tension in the Liver and Gall Bladder, and stagnation between the Liver and Heart, we can, from Chinese medicine, assume that the patient had lived her tender years under conditions which forced her to control and maintain many of her emotions, in particular, anger.

Weakness, to begin with, in the heart system has a tendency to make the child easily afraid. Therefore, traumatic events as well as personalities of parents and other people, would have greater impact. In the event that there is a good deal of anger inspired behavior in the family and social situation, the child would be less inclined to express its hostility openly and therefore would be more inclined towards developing the Liver-Gall Bladder tension to which we are alluding. It is, of course, not anger itself but the repression of anger that affects the liver and the gall bladder system.

Why is this so? We know from bioenergetics and other studies that when anger is repressed the musculoskeletal system, muscles, ligaments and tendons are brought into play in the exercise of this control. We know that under these conditions toxic substances are accumulated to which the Chinese allude as bad energy. It is the responsibility of the Liver to deal with body energy, and excessive build-up of this bad energy may create an overload for that organ system. The Liver-Gall Bladder system is also said in Chinese medicine to control nerves. An increase in "heat," in the Liver and Gall Bladder heightens tension in the nervous system. We see again a vicious cycle between an organ system and an emotional state. If we were to project this condition into the future with no relief, another problem might arise.

The Liver is said to store the blood. If it is overworked and "heat" is created, the blood itself becomes "hot." Since heat rises, the tendency, in terms of energy flow, is for the "heat" to

go toward the head. At first headaches may occur. Later as the "heat" affects the elasticity of the blood vessel walls, hypertension and ultimately, stroke may occur. This contingency is further enhanced by the underlying issue of the constitutional Heart energy problem. If we look on the other side of repressed anger-if we look upon the natural function, which is distorted in order to achieve repressed anger, we see functions of assertiveness and the endless discharge of impure energy. The antithesis of stored anger, hate or rage, is assertion and discharge. Translated into more existential terms, one might say that these natural functions of the wood element enhance a state of being or becoming. It is very much related to the wood element in Chinese cosmology in that the wood is the element related to spring, the time when things begin to grow and come into being.

When being is frustrated and unable to assert itself, we have impotent rage, and all the self-destructive behavior that follows: Guilt, passive-aggressive behavior, negativity, and self-deprecation. We have an ego function problem. Inasmuch as the Liver is considered the planner, and the Gall Bladder the decision maker, the entire body is affected. As the Chinese put it, "the other officials (there being an official for each organ system) become angry if they have no plan." Plans and decisions take place primarily at night during sleep from 11 p.m. to 3 a.m., the time in the Chinese clock for the Liver and Gall Bladder. Depending on other aspects of the personality, impotent rage leads to either depression and passive-aggressive behavior or to violence. Biorhythms are affected. Other organ systems become involved as the patient becomes older. The Kidneys become exhausted in attempting to provide fluid to deal with the increasing heat in the body from the tension in the Liver and the heat in the blood. With the breakdown of these systems, further psychological problems occur. The Kidneys, in an emotional pathological sense, are related to fear. Its natural functions are related to will power, resolve, and the balance between courage and awareness.

There is reverence for, and awe of the transcendental, the acceptance of real limitations in the awareness of cosmic considerations. The Stomach, strongly related to both the Liver and Kidneys, is part of the earth element, which when impaired, may cause over-concern, worry, and a variety of thinking disorders not relevant to this paper. In our patient's pulse we could begin to read the frustration of her being.

## **Conclusion**

The patient demonstrates rather clearly the relationship of one part of the body to another in terms of the normal functioning and development of illness. Her story indicates that what happens in one part of a complex organism may have a profound effect on what happens in another, and that we cannot separate the systems and view them in an isolated fashion. This principle gives us some sense of what is meant when people say that the mind and the body are essentially one.

However much we might concentrate on the emotional problems which this patient presents through anyone of the many varieties of psychotherapeutic schools of thought, the continued dysfunction of her Liver and Gall Bladder system will endlessly create the very problems which one would be likewise endlessly resolving over and over again. Without some attention to these energetic systems (the Heart, Liver and Gall Bladder) the imbalances would continue to create all of those things which we mentioned above, such as underlying fear, negativity, ambivalence, guilt, impotent rage, the inability to plan and make decisions, a passive-aggressive approach to life, and the inability to be and grow. A successful therapy has to be an integrated one.

There have been a number of instances in my experience where people have come with physical symptoms and worked through powerful emotional problems with extraordinary rapidity as the energetic, physical side of the problem was resolved. Often there is, as in the case just presented, a tremendous cathexis of emotion followed by a rather rapid integration through insight and understanding. It is as if a self-fulfilling negative feedback circuit between perception, interpretation, and behavior is broken so that new experiences, new ideas of a corrective nature may enter into the system.

The principal purpose in presenting this case is to give a practical presentation of what is popularly alluded to as holistic medicine and in particular to illustrate the necessity for dealing with both body and mind in approaching the solution to the problem either one may be presenting. I feel that it is important that we give a considerable amount of thought, energy and effort to the development of integrated systems which recognize in a practical sense the essential relationships between the various functions of the body; especially those of the mind and spirit with those of ingestion, digestion, assimilation, circulation, metabolism, and excretion. I have tried to give a practical illustration of how Chinese medicine embodies this principle of oneness.

Acknowledgement: I am deeply grateful to Dr. John Shen of New York City, who has been my teacher and is master of this acupuncture therapy.