

Medical History in Japan

Japanese Acupuncture and Moxibustion under the Rule of GHQ after World War II (4)

Recommendation by the Public Health and Welfare Section for the prohibition of moxibustion and acupuncture, and the response of those in the moxicautey and acupuncture fields in Japan

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The advent of Law No.217 (the Law for Business of Massage, Acupuncture, Moxa-Cautery, Judo-Orthopaedy etc.), which provided highly desired legislated status for these occupations, was a cause for great rejoicing in the field, and caused acupuncturists to feel more confidence and pride in their work. This law also provided a starting point for a variety of reforms in the field of acupuncture and moxibustion. These reforms were placed in the hands of the acupuncture industry, since the GHQ disapproved of the Ministry of Health and Welfare carrying out the reforms itself. The reforms were thus carried forward with only indirect support from the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

Reeducation of acupuncturists

The first step in reform within the industry was the convening in Tokyo of a "Reeducation Instructor Training Short Course", sponsored by the LMAMP (League of Moxa-cautey, Acupuncture and Massage Practitioners) with the support of the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW). This short course, which lasted for 15 days (from September 12 to September 26, 1948), was held to train the instructors who would subsequently lead "reeducation short courses" to be offered in cities and prefectures throughout Japan. Participants included acupuncturists from across the country.

Because the GHQ had previously expressed disapproval at participation by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the curriculum for the short

course was created by members of the acupuncture industry. Materials were drawn from a wide range of sources, not limited to the classical Asian medicine theory of acupuncture and moxibustion and the theory of meridians and acupoints, but also referencing topics related to Western medicine, such as anatomy, physiology, and sports medicine, and discussing regulations related to the Medical Affairs Law. This curriculum laid the foundation for modern education in acupuncture and moxibustion.

The lecturers in each of these fields were acupuncturists and related personnel who had worked for the enactment of legislated status or had been involved in responding to the "GHQ tornado", and who would actively support the acupuncture industry in the future. Although the Ministry of Health and Welfare was officially limited to a supporting role, individual members of the Ministry participated as speakers in the training short course. We can thus infer that the MHW was cooperating in this reform of the industry.

The reeducation program, which was intended to improve the stature and social standing of acupuncturists, indicates both the greatly improved spirits within the industry as it took on these major responsibilities for self-reform, and also the high expectations held by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. The industry and the MHW cooperated on these reforms, and attendees at the first short course subsequently contributed to the reeducation of acupuncturists throughout Japan by serving as presenters in reeducation short courses around the country.

During that same time period, on September 17, the Institute of East Asian Medicine was established as a corporation by a Diet member Mr. Kobayashi, Mr. Komori of the LMAMP chairman, Mr. Okabe and Mr. Hanada as acupuncturists, with Dr. Takeshi Itakura as director. In the wake

of the "GHQ tornado" and the enactment of the Law for Business of Massage, Acupuncture, Moxa-Cautery, Judo-Orthopaedy etc., this institute was established to provide scientific evidence for the effectiveness of acupuncture and to oversee educational reform. Its philosophy and ideals were subsequently transferred to regional research organs focusing on Asian medicine across Japan.

Conclusion

Today the "GHQ tornado" is commonly believed to have been intended to ban the practice of acupuncture and moxibustion in Japan. However, if we look closely at materials from the time, we see that the GHQ "Order for the Prohibition of Moxibustion and Acupuncture" was actually a proposal for reform, rather than a blanket prohibition of acupuncture and moxibustion.

In the process of reviewing the overall situation in Japan, the GHQ observed the longstanding contribution of acupuncture in maintaining the health of the Japanese people, noted the effectiveness of this treatment, and recognized the undeniable importance of this form of medical treatment for the country. However, some issues remained to be resolved before acupuncture could be incorporated into the new medical system. The GHQ proposals for resolving those issues by stringent reforms were interpreted by the Japanese side as "prohibition".

The GHQ was willing to accept the Japanese government's enactment of legislated status for acupuncture and moxibustion. However, the Occupation officials did actively attempt to prohibit the visually impaired from performing acupuncture/moxibustion therapy. This was because there were no other countries in the world where the visually impaired were permitted to perform medical procedures as they were in Japan, and to the GHQ it appeared dangerous for visually impaired persons to

perform acupuncture or moxibustion. However, the visually impaired had a surprising amount of political power, and the Order for the Prohibition of Moxibustion and Acupuncture met with strong resistance. If the GHQ had banned the visually impaired from practicing acupuncture, many visually impaired persons would have lost their means of livelihood and ended up in the streets, inviting tumult and confusion within society. This was an outcome that the GHQ wished to avoid at all costs, since they wanted the occupation government to succeed in order to bolster US credibility and prestige. It thus seems likely that overall Occupation policy was at the root of the GHQ decision to allow the visually impaired to continue working professionally in acupuncture and moxibustion.

The problems that were perceived initially by the GHQ were due in part to differences in cultural expectations and customs between Japan and the United States. It is not an easy thing for any nation or people to understand the culture and customs of another country, so it was unsurprising that the GHQ could not understand the traditional medical system of acupuncture in Japan. If the Japanese side had been unable to comprehend the GHQ's true motives of demanding evidence for the safety and scientific foundation of acupuncture, and of requiring educational reform, and had responded less appropriately to those demands and requirements, then this system of medical therapy might have truly been banned, and acupuncture in Japan would have taken a very different path from what we see today.

The "GHQ tornado" on acupuncture epitomized the relationship at that time between Japan and the United States as occupied and occupying nations. We can expect the incident to be long remembered as an interesting example of the situation in Japanese society after World War II.