

Introduction of Japanese Acupuncture

Considering the Therapist's Hand (4)

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3. Establishment of stimulation methods appropriately modifying responses.

It is important to establish treatment and stimulation techniques allowing the appropriate modification of the responses ascertained through palpation. In other words, a system has to be established determining what kind of stimulation has to be delivered in order to modify specific responses. Since palpation naturally does not include treatment, inclusion of stimulation methodologies in the theory of palpation may seem to be somewhat awkward. For the sake of progress in palpatory skills, it is essential to develop the skills of modifying somatic responses. The reason for this lies in the fact that modification of reactions literally grasped with one's hands through stimulation (therapy) allows for a smoother acquisition of the changes through palpation skills. In fact, palpation skills are techniques to modify somatic responses (in other words, therapeutic techniques) and therefore inseparable from treatment. Thus, efforts should be made to acquire both techniques together rather than try to acquire them separately. It goes without saying, that during the very early stages of the training separate explanations and practice of each portion are easier to comprehend.

When I referred to suitable stimulation methods, a major portion of the decisions regarding the intensity of the stimulation during acupuncture treatment are based on the experience of the clinician. For example, and this is always the same problem, the questions of whether to needle inflamed regions, or else what degree of inflammation would still allow needling, still have no clear answers. Moreover, questions dealing with the conditions of skin, connective

tissue, muscles, indurations and the like, as well as the kind of stimulation appropriate for particular situations have not been clearly summarized. Naturally, the theories pertaining to tonification and drainage of deficient and excess states have been established, but tonification of deficient states using moxibustion, while using acupuncture for sedation in states of excess are just too crude. It is possible to use moxibustion for both tonification and sedation of deficient and excess states and acupuncture can be used the same way for both tonification and sedation of deficient and excess states respectively. In this case it is not clear whether the pathologies here associated with the meanings of deficient and excess states are either identical or different, while the differences in the meaning of the methods employed for tonification and sedation are ill-defined.

In Japan, tonification and sedation are often expressed as the strength of the stimulus dose. In other words, a strong stimulus represents reduction, while a weak stimulus represents tonification. However, in China tonification and sedation are not infrequently expressed in form of the changes the stimulation had brought about. For example, there are the expressions that the burning mountain fire method is warm and therefore tonifying, while the heaven-penetrating cooling method is cooling and therefore sedating. For both the burning mountain fire method and the heaven-penetrating cooling method neither the size of the needles, insertion depth nor stimulus dose vary. The difference is solely whether the needle is twisted to right or to the left. Thus, even while using the same terms "tonification and sedation", the techniques related to tonification and sedation are different in China and Japan. In the future, the differences in acupuncture and moxibustion between China and Japan should be the subject of comparative

analyses and research.

Thus, one of the problems clinicians using acupuncture and moxibustion face during their daily clinical practice is that theories pertaining to the association of particular techniques to the various findings on the patient's body surface are not clearly defined. The needling techniques cannot be simply explained in terms of tonification and sedation for the needling and moxibustion skills, but need to be summarized as techniques associated with specific body surface reactions. At the same time it is also necessary to devise and establish a system for the classification of the findings obtained through palpation.

4. The role of theorization within the theories of acupuncture and moxibustion.

It should be clearly defined what role palpation plays in acupuncture and moxibustion theories play within the above described summarization. A unified theory of the classification of reactions identified through palpation as well as the methods of their identification and the techniques for the modification of these reactions has yet to be established.

Only after the reactions and the methods of their identification, as well as the acupuncture and moxibustion techniques with which these reactions are modified have been systematized, these reactions will be regarded as therapeutically significant reactions. If these reactions are not modified by the acupuncture and moxibustion treatment and are judged not to be indications for acupuncture and moxibustion treatment, they may serve as evidence for differential diagnosis. In other words, these reactions do have a significance as rule-out items, but not for the treatment.

5. Establishment of educational methods and

practices for the acquisition of palpatory skills.

Since palpation is a skill, it is necessary to acquire this skill through repeated instructions and the practice of identifying somatic reactions. However, the education methods pertaining to palpation skills have not yet been established. In particular the teaching of acupuncture and moxibustion itself has inherent problems. Table 3 summarizes these problems (Table 3).

Table 3 Problems pertaining to the teaching of acupuncture and moxibustion

1. Insufficient educational contents pertaining to acupuncture and moxibustion
2. Dissociation between the academic and practical aspects of acupuncture and moxibustion
3. Acupuncture and moxibustion are taught mainly in the form of lectures
4. Indistinct image of the clinician to be trained
5. Insufficient teaching time for clinical practice
6. Method for the handing down of acupuncture and moxibustion techniques have not been established.

An important question among these problems is that "teachers do not have a distinct image of the clinician to be trained". Since it is not clear what kind of acupuncturist should be raised, students do not understand the relevant intentions.

The next problem is, that "methods for the handing down of skills have not been established". As opposed to the traditional model of "learning through observation", repeated technical instructions should also be accompanied by verbal expressions in order to ensure the transmission of a minimum of technical skills.

Naturally, skills can hardly be verbalized. Certainly, this is an area where seeing is believing and only actual touch will lead to a real understanding. Yet, systemization of a minimal degree of verbalization forms an important part of the work of those who try to teach (transmit) these skills. At least on the stage of basic practical training it is necessary to systemize the verbalization of the techniques. It should be remembered that only thanks to the systematic writings in medical books (verbalization), at least in the classics beginning with "Su Wen" and "Ling Shu", the knowledge and skills of oriental medicine could be handed down to the present day.

All things considered, it should be noted that the percentage of classroom lectures in the curricula of modern educational programs is comparatively too high and thus disadvantageous for a field like acupuncture and moxibustion that centers on practical skills. This is an adverse effect of modern education, where knowledge is considered to be superior to practical skills and thus can be said to represent a social disadvantage for the field of acupuncture and moxibustion. Yet, there are still no signs of changes in the social tendencies overstressing intellectual training. On the contrary, these tendencies seem to gain momentum. It is important here to determine how to establish appropriate methods of handing down technical skills instead of being vexed by the curse of overstressed intellectual training.