

Editorial

Acupuncture–Moxibustion and Modern Medicine

Acupuncture is a form of medicine that originated from ancient ideologies, philosophies and science 2,000 years ago along the Yellow River valley. Based on the observation of nature, it considers nature and human beings as inseparable and that human beings exist under the influence of nature. It builds on and theorizes the Qi energy, and explains the relationship between the internal organs and the body surface according to meridians and acupuncture points. Furthermore, it recognizes that the mind and body mutually influence each other, and that the relationship between society and human beings is a factor in the development of diseases. These acupuncture theories were born out of the strong influence of ideologies and philosophies of the masters of various schools of thought that emerged over several centuries prior to the birth of acupuncture, during the Spring and Autumn Warring States period.

Modern medicine, on the other hand, emerged in Europe after the 18th century, based on the ideologies, philosophies and science of modern and contemporary Europe. Modern science and physics achieved rapid progress during the 17th to 18th centuries and formed the basic concept that gave rise to modern Western medicine, which in effect negated the religious medicine of Medieval Europe. Modern medicine separated from superstition and magic, and stressed that diseases are not punishment by the gods, but a result of environmental factors, nutrition and lifestyle habits. It also acknowledged the body's spontaneous cure, but greater emphasis was placed on anti-bacteria drugs (chemico-pharmaceutical preparations) and surgical procedures for external injuries as the underpinnings of its significance.

Given the 2,000-year passage of time between the rise of the two forms of medicine, a simple comparison by time period reveals large differences in historical background, ideologies and philosophies between the two.

However, acupuncture, at the time it emerged, eliminated the spiritual influences of medicine that existed up to then, analyzed life and diseases based on an observation of nature from the scientific stance of the times, and addressed phenomena that occur to living organisms as they are. This approach is basically the same as the approach of observing nature from the standpoint of science, and relates to modern medicine, which is based on science.

Additionally, acupuncture's theorization of the inseparable relationship between nature and human beings could be said to correspond to modern life theories.

Furthermore, acupuncture correlated the parts of the body by identifying the relationship between the inside and outside of the human body according to meridians. Although the existence of meridians has yet to be proven, the development of the system that unifies and integrates the entire body could be said to be in common with the nervous system and circulatory system of modern medicine.

Moreover, when considering the fact that acupuncture defined the influence of social relationships on the physical body as a causal factor of diseases and focused on the issue as one of its pillars, it could be said that acupuncture had already recognized, 2000 years ago, the bud of the issue that is addressed by modern mind-body medicine and psychosomatic medicine.

In these ways, acupuncture's fundamental perception of nature and the development of its system share common aspects with modern medicine.

However, because the study of acupuncture was founded on ancient Chinese books of medicine such as "Suwen," "Lingshu" and "Nanjing," it tried to categorize and fit all phenomena into the framework of the Yin and Yang, Five Phase Theory and the Three Yin and Three Yang Theory that were considered outstanding theories at the time. It is thought that this eventually led to a lack of perspective that also embraces the diversity of uncertain elements that are observed in phenomena displayed by nature and the human body.

In thinking about the future of acupuncture, it would be important to contemplate how best to deal with phenomena expressed by the physical body and incorporate that perspective into a new theoretical system while also giving consideration to Modern Medical theories.

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