

ORIENTAL MEDICINE

In 1971, newspaperman James Reston accompanied President Nixon to China where he experienced firsthand a type of medicine unknown in the United States. Reston received acupuncture treatment, and the entire Nixon delegation was so impressed with what they observed it caused a minor sensation when they returned.

Some doctors in the US practiced acupuncture as early as the 19th Century, but until the 1970s, only those in the Asian communities of America had any real exposure to the traditional medicine of the Orient, and typically only Asian doctors were able to provide it. Because of the interest sparked by Reston's (and others') news articles, the American public clamored for this mysterious Eastern secret that could eliminate pain, reduce the need for surgery and drugs, and actually promote health.

There were two things that the people of the U.S. did not realize: One was that, spectacular as it is, acupuncture is only a part of Oriental medicine. The second was that acupuncture has been used in Europe for more than a hundred years and is taught in most major medical schools there. What Americans thought of as a uniquely Asian method is actually international in its use.

ORIENTAL MEDICINE – MORE THAN ACUPUNCTURE

In traditional Oriental medicine, there are two groups of methods used: the “inner” and the “outer”. Inner methods include oral medicines (herbs, minerals, organic extracts, etc.), dietary regulation, detoxification, mental exercises, and contemplation. Outer methods include point stimulation (whether by pressure, needles, or non-needle stimulation), massage, joint mobilizations, muscular re-education, therapeutic exercises, moxibustion (a type of herbal heat treatment applied to the acupuncture points), and the application of water, heat, cold, or medicinal substances to the skin.

Because of its exposure in the various news media, however, acupuncture is seen to be synonymous with Oriental medicine; so much so, in fact, that the many states which license or certify Doctors of Oriental Medicine register them as “acupuncturists”. This is similar to Doctors of Chiropractic being listed as Chiropractors. There are currently more than 10,000 licensed practitioners in the United States, and more than two dozen colleges training an increasing number of new practitioners every year. The demand for safe,

effective, natural healthcare has resulted in 47 states recognizing acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

MODERN APPROACHES

The European doctors who adopted Oriental medicine added their own refinements over the years, resulting in techniques never dreamed of in ancient China. Many new ways of assisting the bio-electrical systems of the body, which acupuncture seeks to do, have been developed in modern times. Effective stimulation of the acupuncture points has been achieved by the use of electricity, magnetic impulses, infra-red light, and lasers. Many of these developments have taken place in Russia, where energetic medicine is taken very seriously. Acupuncture is also a much-respected method used in convention medicine in France.

Diagnostic information, once obtained only by careful observation by the doctor, is now possible by electrical readings taken from various test points on the body in much the same way as a Western-trained doctor uses an EKG to read the heart, or an MRI to check internal tissues. Herman technology was able to put Oriental medical concepts on an equal footing with the most modern scientific developments.

Most Americans, though, are not aware of the mountains of scientific data behind the practice of Oriental medicine. They associate it with human pincushions, or have been misinformed about the scope of the practice. Although former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, MD has endorsed its use, the public has little idea of how widely it is practiced, or for what conditions it is successful in treating. The World Health Organization (medical department of the United Nations) lists over 150 illnesses that show good response to acupuncture.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO HEALTHCARE

What appeals most to those who choose Oriental medicine for their health care needs is the individualized attention and treatment they receive. In ancient times, doctors were on retainer to the families they served, and were paid to help their patients maintain their health, rather than being paid once the people fell ill. This is quite a contrast with our current medical system, where you see a doctor only if you're sick!

Because of this tradition, the modern Doctor of Oriental Medicine gets to know his or her patients very well, as in days gone by. Health is seen as a matter of internal and

external balance, and this can be promoted with routine treatments designed to prevent illness. Long-time users of Oriental medicine attest to the disease-preventing effects of regular acupuncture treatments, or seasonal lifestyle adjustments. The philosophy of the Eastern approach appeals to people's common sense: It's more logical to try to increase health than to decrease disease!