

“ As Above , So Below “ Acupressure : A Revolutionary New Look At The Role Of
Taoist Acupuncture in Massage

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How often has it happened in your clinic that patients with chronic pain have not substantially improved over time? Or when was the last time you treated a Fibromyalgia patient with Chronic Fatigue ,who made such demands on your massage techniques and modalities, that you felt worn out after each session ? As massage therapists ,we are taught not to simply do spot treatments for patients with chronic myofascial pain because of the interrelatedness of the myofascial systems of our body. In addition , we have become so aware of the body - mind connection that we also aim at stress relief in our massages. However, this usually means that we give full body massages for chronic pain, that tend to be lengthy and physically and emotionally demanding . Some therapists will first give local pain relief with hydrotherapy and medical massage before treating the whole body afterwards. We become discouraged and angry then , when the patient finally abandons us unexpectedly, after numerous sessions .

This is when we seek another manual healing technique that is more effective than the kind of massage we have learned. At school, we have become familiar with Traditional Chinese Medicine (henceforth to be known as TCM) in the form of acupressure and perhaps Tui-Na , which is Chinese medical massage. However , most of the time, applications of these modalities have always been local. If someone had elbow pain, you would apply acupressure around the elbow and even on the sore site. This would cause some considerable discomfort at first, if the myofascial pain was acute and severe. The

fact that the patient often felt a deep sense of relaxation afterwards was attributed to the interconnectedness of meridians and the different body systems.

Yet, it is this understanding in TCM that all parts of the body and all physiological systems are interrelated, that can make our treatments of chronic pain shorter and more effective. Furthermore, we have the ability to deepen this treatment by simultaneously balancing the mind, body and spirit or emotions of the patient. A valuable model for selecting and understanding treatment points can be found in the Hermetic Laws.

The Hermetic Laws originated in ancient Egypt and form the basis of all esoteric knowledge about life and the universe. These laws also explain the basis of all vibrational or energy based medicine. One of the best known laws is known as the Law of Correspondence and underlies the principle of: “As above, so below. As below so above.” Followers of New Age philosophy are familiar with its application in books like “The Secret” and the film, “What the bleep do we know...”. This principle forms a key element of a different form of acupressure and acupuncture as practiced by Master acupuncturists who were followers of Taoist philosophy.

Perhaps one way to grasp the principle of as above so below is to look at the similarity between the solar system and the structure of atoms. Both have a central nucleus with bodies orbiting around it in regular patterns. Similarly, one can compare the spiral shape of the Milky Way galaxy to spiral snail shells and the DNA double helix within our cells.

According to this law and Hermetic laws in general we exist on many levels simultaneously, from the most dense and gross (physical) , to the most subtle (spirit). This connection is demonstrated when an injury to the physical body creates ongoing interference in the subtle energy of the person, that manifests in stored , self-perpetuating memories or trauma. This subtle energy constitutes the mind and emotions that can hold negative impressions and can precipitate on the physical plane as disease and pain. Thus the healing process can be blocked when there is interference on this subtle energy level. In fact some New Age philosophers maintain that such interferences can attract other accidents and traumatic events to people through the Law of Attraction. This assumes that there is a similarity between our consciousness and our energy bodies. One can also understand the Hermetic laws by assuming that the body is like a holograph. The great is contained in the small and the small is contained in the great. This means you can mirror or image one part of the body on another part . The therapist has to view the body as three-dimensional !

In the acupuncture and TCM classic the *Nei Jing* (The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal medicine) , this Law of Correspondence is paraphrased as follows: “ For diseases of the upper body, treat the lower body . For diseases of the right, treat the left. For diseases of the front , treat the back. For diseases of the inner, treat the outer.” (one must also assume a vice versa after each statement) . This law can be manifested in two systems of acupuncture and acupressure , known as Great Loops and Reverse Body Image

When you stimulate an appropriate Great Loop point you can cause a healing or pain – relief in another corresponding body part. What is amazing is that pain can be more effectively treated by using a distal holographic point , than a local point on the affected area. The connection between corresponding areas is made through the six great meridians , each of which includes one upper and one lower extremity channel or meridian. You can treat pain in the upper extremity channel by looking for corresponding tender points on the lower extremity channel . Thus lateral elbow pain can be treated by looking for a corresponding tender point or points on the lateral side of the opposite knee. Such points are mostly on a meridian traversing the joint, but may only be close to the meridian or joint and still on the lateral side. The therapist has to probe with palpation for these tender points.

In great loops treatment the principle is that , for pain on or around a joint , go to the point on the opposite quadrant of the body , as shown in the joint correspondence chart below.

GREAT LOOP CORRESPONDENCES OF JOINTS – RELATE TO OPPOSITE SIDE

FIRST

SHOULDER - HIP	GLUTEUS MAXIMUS - SCAPULA
ELBOW - KNEE	
WRIST - ANKLE	
FINGER - TOE	

Again, palpate for a really sore point around the opposite joint and start treatment with that. Experience tells us that when treated, distal points are more effective in pain relief and musculoskeletal disorders than just using local points. It may not even be pain that's addressed but tightness. Often, in chronic pain, there might be a cluster of distal points, that need to be treated as well.

Below is a set of photos illustrating the correspondences of opposite joints. The dots represent common and possible acupressure points for treatment.





The next step , is to locate locally a pain point and palpate that simultaneously with a distal point. The creation of a circuit between a local pain point and a distal point is often superior to just treating the distal point alone. The creation of a circuit , is along a yin yang imaging of the body. In Taoist philosophy, the body can be divided into quadrants each representing a different polarity from its neighbor. Yang represents positive energy and yin negative energy. It's as if you were connecting a battery.

This is also based on a set of correspondences. Thus, the left is yang, which represents the male half of the human being . Yang represents also energy, light and expansion. Traditionally, yang is associated with the emotions and most males are treated for emotional issues like anger predominantly. The left is yin and represents the female half of the human being . Yin represents substance, liquids, darkness, contraction . Again, traditionally , females are treated for blood and lymphatic related disorders. The circuit will therefore consist of a yin - yang combination of body parts . If the client has left

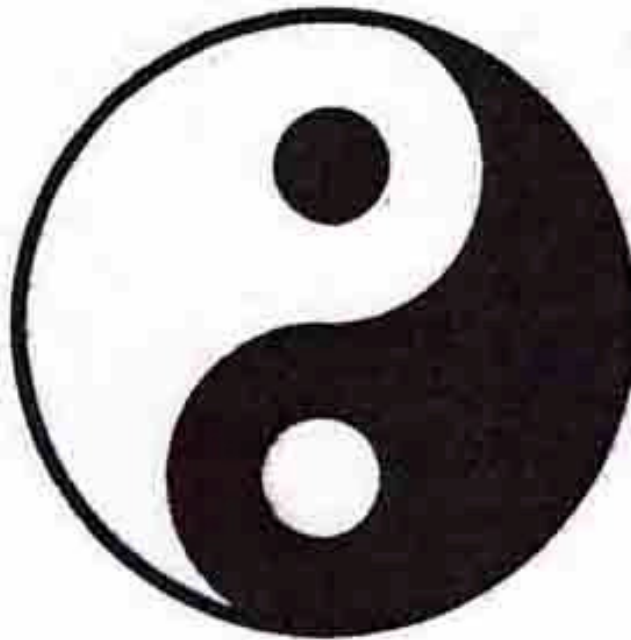
elbow pain , that means that the yang side is affected . You palpate for a tender point on the right knee , which is yin. Once you close the circuit by connecting to the two points, you have a yin – yang loop with the pain being drained by the yin part of the body .

The underlying energetic principle behind the yin – yang combination , is that both are opposites that complement one another . Yet this is a dynamic combination with both yin and yang constantly wrestling for supremacy. If the pain which is yang , is left untreated , it can overcome the blood and lymph part of the body (yin) by creating deficiencies .

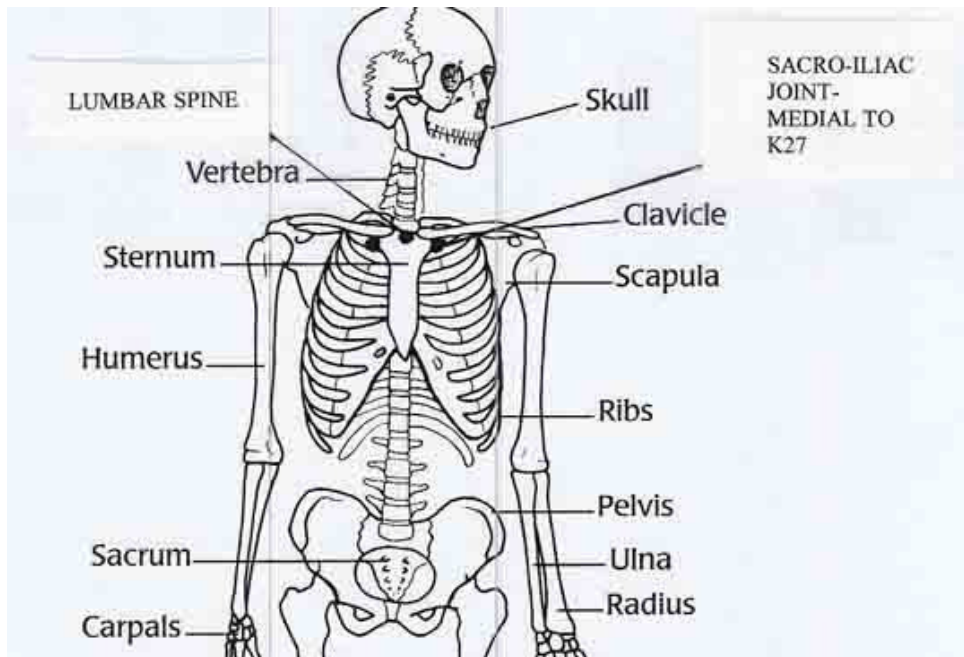
Neuromuscular therapy theory , will tell you how the pain will eventually spread up and down and across the limb and body, if not treated. That means a pain-spasm-pain cycle that will not allow for sufficient blood and lymph flow to cause healing. Therefore there will be a deficiency of yin . This dynamic cycle is illustrated below with the Tai Ji symbol. We see the white representing the yang and the dark the yin. We can also notice how the yin has retreated as the yang encroaches on it.

The small black and white circles represent the idea that within each yin and yang half, there is the seed for its opposite counterpart. That means each half contains its opposite, which is an integral part of it. The next enlarged image shows yin and yang in balance

with equal halves.



Complementing the principle of the Great Loops is the principle of the Reverse Body Image . Again, the practitioner looks for distal points, but these distal points are situated on the trunk of the body. In order to find a corresponding distal point to a painful area on the trunk , the practitioner first has to image that painful area on the trunk itself. Typically, the spine comes to mind in any common pain in the trunk area. As above , So below can be applied as follows: The spine is holographically represented upside down and on the front of the body . The neck area can be imaged on and around the midsaggittal line , two finger widths below the navel. On the other hand, the lumbar area and sacro-iliac area can be imaged on an area near the top of the manubrium and slightly lateral to it between the first and second ribs.



However, you can switch over from the Reverse Image model to the Great Loops model by imaging the neck on the leg above one of the ankles and the occiput on the ankle and heel. The greater the distance, the greater the effect, it seems. Also, if the pain is on the left of the occiput, or the right, the therapist should look for a corresponding point on the opposite leg, or ankle/heel.

An understanding of the interconnectedness of body, mind and spirit on the basis of these two Hermetic laws brings the therapist closer to a higher level of causality of pain and disease, than ever before. The therapist is able to access the "main switchboard" of the client's body and consciousness, thus promoting true healing.

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