

MY PATIENT, MY TEACHER AND USING "THE FOUR GATES"

By Lawrence Howard, LAc, MSAc

After a patient has been "needed" they may say "I feel a tingle" and the acupuncturist will likely respond by saying "it is normal" then exit the treatment room. However, this is an opportunity for acupuncturist to further their understanding of Oriental Medicine beyond the text books.

Much is revealed about treatment and Oriental Medical theory (unwritten parts in particular) by 1) training the patient to become energetically aware, 2) asking fine-tuned questions about their experiences, 3) listening to the patient's descriptions and 4) correlating the descriptions and experiences to OM.

This practice is not typical of practicing Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and is why I refer to how I practice as "Energetic Acupuncture"—TCM acupuncture plus qigong/taiji type awareness. I often ask my patients to describe their sensations "no matter how strange" and tell them "the

stranger the sensation the better." I then attempt to correlate their experiences to TCM theory or other forms of energetic healing to better understand OM and develop treatment techniques.

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Training the Patient

Teaching the patient the common taiji/qigong/energetic healing exercise of feeling the "Qi Ball" is one way for them to perceive their own qi/energy. Simply stated, the patient relaxes and holds their hands several inches apart and slightly moves their hands towards and away from each other slightly and slowly. Some patients will feel warmth others will feel a "magnet" sensation any strange sensation is acceptable.

Lesson #1 The Four Gates—Redistributing Qi

There is a common acupuncture point combination called "The Four Gates" (Liv3 *Tai Chong* and LI4 *He Gu*) one point is on the hand and the

other is on the foot. This combination is often used to promote general qi circulation and relaxation and is often used as part of a larger acupuncture point prescription.

A few energetically aware patients have had the experience of their entire body rotating clockwise (towards their left) about the area of their solar plexus as the axis and centrifugally (towards their extremities but not head) when this combination is used alone. This experience describes a mechanism of how this point combination works and under which conditions these points work well. Interestingly, the direction of the movement is clockwise and coincides with the natural direction of movement of the chakras. (Indian energy centers along the midline of the body.)

Some applications: when there is an imbalance of the body's qi where there is an excess amount of qi at the center of the body and a deficiency of the extremities. This dynamic is indicated by symptoms as nausea, headache, or stress (emotions stuck at the chest/abdominal region according to TCM) with weakness of limbs.

STICKY RICE AND DRAGON BOAT RACES

So what does sticky rice and dragon boat races have in common?

In the year 278 BCE, upon learning of the upcoming devastation of his state from invasion by a neighbouring Warring State, Qu Yuan, a poet and minister in the southern state of Chu and champion of political loyalty and integrity, is said to have waded into the Miluo river holding a great rock in order to commit ritual suicide as a form of protest against the corruption of the era.

The common people, upon learning of his suicide, rushed out on the water in their fishing boats to the middle of the river and tried desperately to save Qu. They beat drums

and splashed the water with their paddles in order to keep the fish and evil spirits from his body. Later on, they scattered rice into the water to prevent him from suffering hunger. (Another belief is that the people scattered rice to feed the fish, in order to prevent the fishes from devouring the poet's body.)



However, late one night, the spirit of Qu Yuan appeared before his friends and told them that the rice meant for him was being intercepted by a huge river dragon. He asked his friends to wrap their rice into three-cornered silk packages to ward off the dragon. This has been a traditional food ever since known as zongzi or sticky rice, although they are wrapped in leaves instead of silk.

In commemoration of Qu Yuan, people hold dragon boat races annually on the day of his death to celebrate the rescue effort. It is called The Duanwu Festival 端午節, and is celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth month. ■

Qi Department: TCM

Lesson #2 The Four Gates and Ren 12 (Zhong Wan)—Tonifying and Redistributing Qi

Ren12 (*Zhong Wan*) is a point used for a variety of conditions and is located on the midline of the body at the solar plexus region. It is often used to improve digestion and tonify (add qi to the body). When this is the first point used the patient experienced increasing "heaviness" of the upper abdomen with rapid shallow breathing. In this situation the body was absorbing qi via the needled point but the qi was stuck in the local area creating a "qi stagnation" below the diaphragm thus interfering with breathing.

When the Four Gates were added the sensation of heaviness was reduced and proper breathing restored. The combination of the Ren12 (*Zhong Wan*) and The Four Gates created a dynamic where qi was drawn into the body and moved towards the limbs as verified by the restoration of breathing and the sensation of the limbs feeling "heavier and stronger". This sensation moved from the arms and legs towards the hands and feet. Ultimately, the entire body felt stronger and "energized".

This event illustrates the importance of balancing tonification with redistribution of qi.

Lesson #3 Tonification Point Variation

There are many acupuncture points that tonify the body but there seems to be occasions where one acupuncture point affects the dynamic of other points in unexpected ways. An energetically aware patient described the rotation sensation of the Four Gates hindered by the use of St36 (*Zu San Li*), (located on the leg below the knee) a very commonly used acupuncture point often used to tonify the body. This patient felt that their upper body was attempting to move counterclockwise but the legs felt heavy as though "stuck to the table".

Instead, there was a tingling sen-

sation that emanated from St36 (*Zu San Li*) along its associated meridian—the Stomach—towards its associated organ—also the stomach—where some audible sounds were heard.

Lesson #4 The Four Gates For the Energy Healer

Once the dynamic of the acupuncture points and their combinations are understood then it is possible for energy healers to duplicate the dynamic without needles. The energy healer simply holds their hand about two to four inches from solar plexus of the patient, feels their aura (a technique similar sensing the qi ball), then slowly moves their hand counterclockwise (relative to the patient)—towards their left, spiraling outward to about 3 feet from the midline of the body. (Beyond this distance the patient will notice a decrease or elimination of sensation.) The result is a balancing comparable to insertion of needles. This technique might fall under the category "external qi gong".

The energy healer/acupuncturist may find this technique a useful addition to their practice. The energy healer may add this to the downward "sweeping" hand movement of "general aura cleansing". The acupuncturist may use this as a quick technique in situations where the patient feels "off balance" after the needles have been removed.

It should not be a surprise that when I finish a treatment that I thank the patient. They may not notice but I am thanking them for helping me to learn what perhaps the ancient writers may have thought was just common sense. ■

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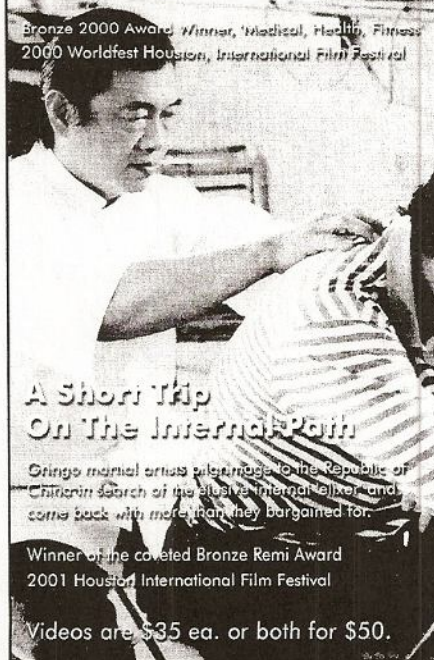
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