



Short Communication

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Bridges Between Chiropractic and Traditional Chinese Medicine (Part 1)



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Introduction

Even though acupuncture began to be used in chiropractic seminars and classes during the 1960's, [1] acupuncture was not officially recognized until 1975 by the *American Chiropractic Association* [2]. The increased interest was initially due in no small part to the fact that James Reston, a member of Nixon's press corps in China, underwent an emergency appendectomy using

acupuncture as an anesthesia, which later was widely reported in the press. Spinal manipulation also has a long tradition in Oriental medicine. Just as chiropractors have been affecting the balance of the meridians since its inception, acupuncturists have been using manipulation as well as myofascial or muscular palpation for millennia (Figure 1).

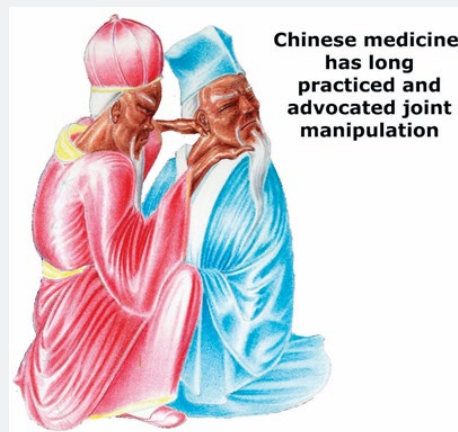


Figure 1: Bridges between Chiropractic and Traditional Chinese Medicine.

A Review by Li & Zhong [3] States

"As opposed to Western medicine, some Chinese classic ancient books about the basic theory of TCM or manipulation are still regarded as very important books and will be found on a list of required readings for the student who wants to master the Chinese spinal manipulations; one notable example is *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine*..." [4] "The spinal manipulative book that has made a notable impact on the society of Chinese spinal manipulation is *Treatment of Soft Tissue Lesions* [5], which looks at the integration of TCM and Western medicine and in which

the rotatory manipulation is definitely advanced as application for the treatment of cervical spondylopathy, prolapse of lumbar intervertebral disc and related disorders of the spine."

Feldman and Yamamoto [6] Note

"...a substantial chiropractic and orthopedic approach to bone and muscle manipulation has developed in the Orient. This approach compliments and further extends the treatment of the meridians. Spinal adjustments and muscle relaxation, as well as the application of herbal plasters and compresses, are often utilized as aids in massage practice." There are many parallels

between meridian therapy and the chiropractic profession. Not only has meridian therapy been utilizing the palpation of muscles for diagnostic information for millennia as well as manipulating and massaging muscles and joints (just as chiropractic has been affecting the meridians), but the philosophies of health parallel as well. Meridian therapy works to balance and release the “life force” within the body. Both professions are dedicated to prevention of disease rather than trying to treat symptoms. Both use natural approaches to work with the body rather than drugs and surgery. Medical doctors who have adopted acupuncture into their practices state that they are now practicing constructive medicine rather than destructive medicine. Astin et al. [7] suggest that large numbers of physicians are either referring to or practicing some of the well-known forms of CAM and that many physicians believe that these therapies are useful or efficacious. Acupuncture and chiropractic (43% and 40% respectively) are the most accepted of the complementary therapies within the biomedical community. Approximately 53% of these surveyed physicians believed in the efficacy of chiropractic, with 51% for acupuncture [8]. In fact there are an extensive number of chiropractic techniques following the initial urging and influence of Dr. George J. Goodheart, Jr, the founder of Applied Kinesiology—that incorporate acupuncture points and TCM principles [9-13]. The *American Chiropractic Association's* College of Chiropractic Acupuncture reports a poll of 60,000 U.S. chiropractors and that over 80 percent are using acupuncture in some form. Acupuncture is now a post-graduate course in 75% of the chiropractic colleges, and it is board-approved in many states with the list growing every year, and several have incorporated acupuncture into their teaching curricula before the postgraduate level as well. Utilization of the manual muscle test to evaluate the meridian system gives the physician an added opportunity to improve meridian function on purpose instead of by accident. Many times, in the past chiropractors, osteopaths, physio- and massage-therapists have produced results in patients by improving balance in the meridian system [14]. Muscle testing for this reason has become a normal part of many acupuncturists practice [15-19]. TCM is still not accepted by some Western medical scientists [20]. Acupuncture, even though used for thousands of years, makes Western scientists uncomfortable due to the barriers of language and philosophy. The fundamental force of TCM, Qi, is also an elusive, mysterious, “can’t quite be translated” concept. Sometimes familiar words are used with radically different meanings—for instance, acupuncturists may talk of ‘taking the pulse’, but then may classify its characteristics using terms such as ‘wiriness’ or ‘slipperiness’, which are unrecognized in Western medicine. Similarly, TCM understanding of terms such as the ‘Spleen’ and ‘Circulation Sex’ is not confined to the organ itself, but rather relates to categories of physiological processes and psychosocial complexes that TCM associates with these organs: for example, the ‘angry liver’, the ‘anxious heart’, or the ‘melancholy spleen’. It is important not to interpret terms used in TCM too literally and to understand that they are sometimes used metaphorically or as a shorthand for signs, symptoms and

syndromes that are not recognized (or not seen as of significance) in conventional Western biomedicine.

Western scientists want to get at what is really happening when acupuncture treatment gets results and describe this process in scientific language. The Western scientific method understands how the process operates when it can be broken down into elements that can be identified, named, measured and reproduced: electrical function, aerodynamics, laser, chemical compounds and substances whose size and shape can be calculated. The big question from the scientific world is why this can’t be done with acupuncture...? Auspiciously for the health of the Western world, the concepts of East and West have been combined in several diagnostic methods of chiropractic. The practice of applied kinesiology and Neuro Emotional Technique for instance include meridian therapy and a number of additional Eastern concepts. In the application of these chiropractic methods the muscular system of the body is used as a measure of meridian response and function. These chiropractic approaches have now given the Western scientist important and useful information: a method of measuring the effects of meridian energy upon neuromuscular function. Part 2 of this article will describe the neurophysiology of the chiropractor’s effect upon the acupuncture system.

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