

JING SHEN

Issue 4: July 2009

from the College of Integrated Chinese Medicine



The Fire Element

Lonny Jarrett explores the heart of heaven within us

Steering your practice through the credit crunch

Advice from Honora Lee Wolfe

Treating the shen

Angie Hicks on five blocks which can obstruct the mind-spirit

Acupuncture for shock

Peter Mole explains its effectiveness



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Why Jing Shen?
Just as *jing* and *shen* stand alone but unite as a combined power, so do TCM and Five Element theory come together to create the integrated style of acupuncture taught here at the College of Integrated Chinese Medicine. Our magazine is intended to spark ideas, fuel discussion, and help nourish our professional community.

Your chance to win a copy of this DVD, reviewed on page 34. Email Charlotte the *Pin Yin* for **Pericardium 1** (as in the Manual). Draw takes place 2 September.*



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Editor Charlotte Brydon-Smith
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Here we are again, with the swell of summer upon us; we should be seeing all our hard efforts from the past months manifesting. However with all this talk of the recession and the credit crunch, we thought you might just need a little extra encouragement. So we have fortified this issue of *Jing Shen* with 'ripe and ready to pick fruits' to encourage your survival in such challenging times.

For the deeper reaching perspective we offer you a beautiful article on the Fire Element by Lonny Jarrett. Debra Betts provides inspiration on how to write a book, tips on how to thrive come from Honora Lee Wolfe, plus latest book and DVD reviews. Gio Maschio focuses on *qi gong* breathing exercises and Danny Blyth ignites our taste buds with seasonal food energetic ideas. And to steady us in our clinical experience, to maintain our root, we have Angie Hicks helping us to identify blocks to treatment and Peter Mole exploring the often overlooked presence of shock in our patients.

So with the warmest of hearts,
we wish you well, in your summer swell

Charlotte

Charlotte Brydon-Smith Lic Ac, BSc (Hons) Editor
charlottebrydonsmith@googlemail.com



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The Fire Element through heaven's eyes

Lonny Jarrett considers the Fire Element and some of its associations – love, sex and compassion – from the absolute perspective of consciousness itself



Much of what we have had to say about the Fire Element as Western practitioners of Chinese medicine these last 36 years has been greatly influenced by post-modern values.¹ We have come to understand our medicine through a humanistic, psychological perspective emphasising the feeling and emotional dimensions of our experience. We have considered the Fire Element from the very personal perspective of the ego's fears and desires. Importance has been placed on how patients feel about being wounded, victimised, traumatised, and betrayed in life. Such 'shocks' have been recognised to 'compromise boundaries', impact the functional relationship between the heart, lungs, and kidneys, and injure the circulatory system. As practitioners we endeavour to help patients 'heal' from their wounds in order once again to feel safe to experience joy, trust, and love. We have tailored a medicine to treat the ego structures of the 'sensitive self' under the auspices of the 'spiritual practice of medicine'.

It is important to consider that the Fire Element is the presence of heaven within us. It is through our own hearts that we are one with the heart of heaven. As there is only one north star, one sun, one emperor, and one heart, there is only one fire in this universe.

Awakening to this absolute fire beyond the individuated self-sense, reveals that the very relative personal realm where we experience such a compelling relationship to our history of perceived trauma, is an illusion. When we awaken to fire as consciousness, we discover that best part of ourselves that is rooted in, and ever arising from, emptiness. Here we have never been wounded, are already whole, and cannot relate to needing more time to heal at the level of the heart, mind, and spirit. We discover that the presence and demand of goodness, positivity, and creativity within us is absolute, entirely impersonal, and just waiting for us to get onboard.

'When we awaken to fire as consciousness, we discover that best part of ourselves that is rooted in, and ever arising from, emptiness.'

From this perspective we discover that all of our fears and desires are insignificant compared to our purpose (*ming*: destiny) and potential (*jing*). We renounce needing any more time to overcome our past and set about creating the future, fuelled by a ceaseless, and selfless, passion. And we find out just how small our conceptions have been regarding notions of love, intimacy, trust, compassion, boundaries, control, surrender, mind, spirit, connection, and any other attribute of the

Fire Element one might care to mention. After all, these are newly emergent properties of consciousness in the context of a nearly 15 billion year developmental stream.

Here, I'll consider the Fire Element, and some of its associations – love, sex and compassion – from the absolute perspective of heaven, or consciousness itself. Sure it's outrageous, and perhaps a bit presumptuous, but why not stretch a bit and try?

Fire, water, consciousness and the void

The Fire and Water Elements are emblematic of the dual poles of heaven and earth within us. As the sun rises out of the ocean, consciousness arises out of the infinite void to propel creation forward. The will of no-thing, to manifest some-thing, is the creative impulse and consciousness (*shen*) itself. It is interesting to contemplate, ‘When something came from nothing, was that a “YES!”, a “no”, or a “maybe”?’. If it was a “YES!” who was it that said yes? If indeed it was I, then I am responsible for the whole thing.

The renunciation of victimisation and the acceptance of a responsibility that is of cosmic proportion, is a manifestation of an enlightened heart. Only a practitioner who strives to embrace this virtue will cultivate the gravity to awaken the hearts of others. Awakening is the experience of consciousness as the motivating force of universal development, realising itself through us, and as us. The impulse that motivates all seekers is only ever searching for itself. When we apply intention to the contemplation



of consciousness the explosion of fire is instantaneous. Imagine the sun rising out of the ocean to experience an infinite draw to its source in the depths while simultaneously recognising itself as the will that initiated and sustains the entire creation that it is perceiving.

If we look at creation (becoming) through the eyes of emptiness (being) we awaken to the perennial revelation that the universe is an illusion, a thin veil stretched over an infinite, timeless, sea. But, if we look at emptiness (water) through the eyes of consciousness (fire) as the creative impulse, we awaken to discover the call of our own infinite potential. Nothing could be more attractive to consciousness

then its own immanent potential! The primacy of consciousness is revealed in unseeded meditation when we renounce all relationship to the content and quality of our experience, liberating consciousness from our conditioned minds. Hence, meditation is about 'no relationship'.

'Spontaneity is the natural expression of a liberated heart unconstrained by the fetters of the ego's fears and desires... not something we have to try to do (*wuwei*). Rather it is a virtue attained through the proper application of will (water) and interest (fire) manifesting effortlessly through who we've actually become.'

When meditation ends, we open our eyes to discover ourselves in relationship to the entire universe that appears before us. Relationship requires continual responses, which are based on choices we make according to our values. Choices exist hierarchically on a continuum from selfish to selfless. The virtue *ziran* has been translated as 'spontaneity'. It refers to our ability to act prior to mind (thought, feeling, history). Spontaneity manifests when we act from an unselfconscious passion, purely motivated to move things forward toward wholeness. Spontaneity is the natural expression of a liberated heart unconstrained by the fetters of the ego's fears and desires. Spontaneity is not something we have to try to do (*wuwei*). Rather it is a virtue attained through the proper application of will (water) and interest (fire) manifesting effortlessly through who we've actually become.

Spirit, mind, enlightenment

Ming 命 Destiny, orders, life

Ming 明 Enlightenment, illumination

Ming 名 Name

Ming 冥 Dark, profound, meditation, sleep, death, hell, confused

The Fire Element is the manifestation of heaven, the impulse toward perfection, within us. It is through our own hearts that we have the capacity to recognise our union with heaven. Hence, the spiritual experience has often been discussed in terms of 'light', 'fire', and 'burning'. The effect of staring into this fire can be likened to going blind from staring into the sun. Consider how the sun blanches a photograph over time to leave nothing but a pure white surface erasing all distinguishing characteristics of the individual.

Shen has been translated as both 'spirit' and 'mind'. I prefer to translate *shen* as 'consciousness', the capacity to both perceive and initiate. One of the primary manifestations of *shen* is 'interest'. The interest a person has to really live, right now, without excuses as evidenced by his or her quality of care and attention. *Shen* recognises no obstacles to its expression and illuminates all self deception. *Shen* is the ceaseless passion to manifest one's highest potential for greater integrity, right now, not for one's self, but for the expression of spirit, light, and consciousness.

When I use the term ‘mind’, I refer to our capacity to orient in time and space by storing and accessing memories. The mind is not inherent in consciousness (*shen*) but is an evolved mechanism emergent from the human nervous system. Mind can be conditioned by ego as the force that personalises all experience. What I call ‘mind’ is storing not just unadorned experience, but also our emotional and physiological responses, physical sensations, and our interpretations of events as seen through the lens of our culturally given value systems. To the degree that we place attention on the contents of the mind we become identified with it, seeing ourselves as the sum total of all we have experienced in the past. History becomes our reference point for relating to all new experience. So conditioned, we lose touch with the spontaneous (*ziran*) impulse to create the future and instead begin to protect the past. Attachment to the past creates cynicism about what is possible now and in the future. Cynicism is the chief poison of the heart.

Love

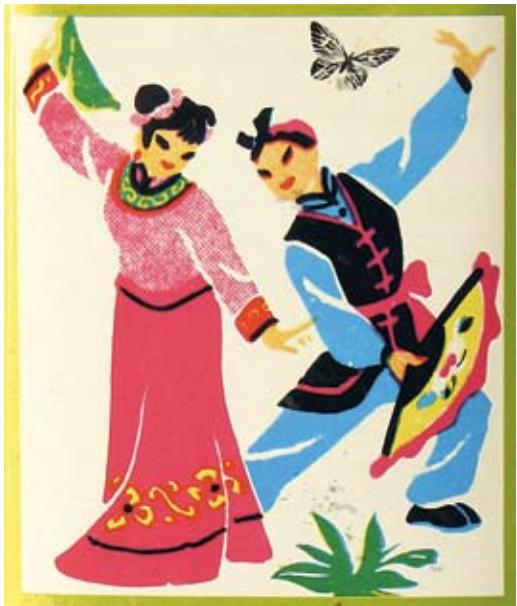
Love absolute requires everything from us. It illuminates just how much we are really willing to give, or not give, for the sake of our highest realisation. Through the perspective of absolute love, the pretence of our ego’s desire for self-serving ‘intimacy’ becomes clear. We discover that in heaven’s love there is nothing to be held onto, nothing for the self, and only a demand for clarity, integrity, and transparency for their own sake. What sense does the idea of any particular relationship



being unique make when seen from heaven’s perspective that we are already one? In higher states, when we take our attention off the fears and desires of the ego, we discover a selfless love that is universal, as impersonal as gravity, and that is attached to no-thing in particular. The authentic self is love and recognises no separation. It is the force of attraction that binds all into one.

‘In higher states, when we take our attention off the fears and desires of the ego, we discover a selfless love that is universal, as impersonal as gravity, and that is attached to no-thing in particular.’

The ego, in order to maintain the illusion of separation, personalises our experience of love. We imagine that our feeling of love means something unique about us and the object of our affection. As we all know, ‘I love you’ can mean very many different things! Such personal ‘love’ is a manifestation of



desire and results in attachment. We attempt to take possession of others using love as a type of currency through which we manipulate and control. We become attached to others as the source of love seeking their warmth and affirmation. In time we feel victimised resenting the control we feel the other person has over us. Victimisation is antithetical to the virtue of propriety expressed by a liberated heart.

Two people 'in love' often appear as being lost in a bubble exclusive to only them. Romantic delusion is perhaps the clearest example of the ego at work as a filter, in this case suppressing all available information suggesting that we aren't actually going to get what we want from another person.

In romantic relationships, we are able to maintain the illusion of perfection for a short while. Eventually, the filter stops working and circumstances illustrate the nature of our delusion in terms so clear that even we can't deny them. Then we say, 'My partner changed! I feel betrayed! I'm not safe!'. In the instant that a relationship is over, we can miraculously see all the evidence, that had always been present, revealing our 'special love' was far from perfect. We respond with an awesome sense of victimisation only to endeavour to 'learn' from the past, and pull ourselves together again for yet another try at the promise of perfection. From an absolute perspective, romantic love is the most obvious form of insanity that most of us have experienced. And yet the illusion of romantic love is one of the hardest for us to let go of – even though we know it's crazy!

'What does a relationship look like when freedom and integrity are the highest shared priorities and love is merely the reflection of those commitments?'

If love is more important than integrity then, under pressure, a relationship will have neither. If integrity is the priority, then neither person will have to be concerned about love. It is interesting to contemplate, 'What does a relationship look like when freedom and integrity are the highest shared priorities and love is merely the reflection of those commitments?'.

Sexuality

Traditionally, spiritual paths have taken one of two perspectives. Some traditions suggest one must renounce sexuality in order to give one's self entirely to god. Sexuality is seen as a lower impulse to be avoided as a distraction from the higher aspirations of the spiritual life. Some traditions have maintained that sex is a vehicle through which one can recognise non-duality and evolve spiritually. Neither perspective seems relevant in our present-day context.

From a practical standpoint, I have seen people hide out in both celibate and sexual practices and evidence no meaningful development.

From a heavenly perspective, sex is neutral. If we are already *one*, then what sense does it make that through sexuality we might become one? Perfect intimacy is possible with strangers with whom we share a felt sense of responsibility in undertaking a great task.

'From a heavenly perspective, sex is neutral. If we are already one, then what sense does it make that through sexuality we might become one?'

I have noticed that sexual experience with another tends to make things rather more, and never less complicated. To the degree we are motivated by desire, sex tends to create attachment in a way that diminishes autonomy, creates dependence, and lessens intimacy. It is interesting to contemplate that, from heaven's perspective, our enjoyment of sex is neutral.

Compassion

'Without compassion, the truth can become unbearable. Without truth, compassion becomes both useless and meaningless. Compassion cannot heal what it seeks to hide.'

Reverend John Kirkley²

If we look to pre-modern teachings for direction on how to live the spiritual realisation in the world, we are advised to cultivate compassion, a virtue frequently ascribed to the Fire Element. As healers, it is easy to identify with the value of compassion as we endeavor to alleviate suffering. Chinese medicine is a science of integrity whose purpose is to promote evolution from a relatively divided state to increasing states of wholeness. As practitioners of integral medicine we have to be very concerned about the relative balance of compassion and truth in our clinical practices.

I would not say truth and compassion are identical but, rather, are inextricably linked. They both have their source in the absolute and always emerge together as light. Such absolute light purifies us, literally burning away everything that is relative. Love absolute that shines with the radiance of compassion and truth is highly conditional. The sense of this conditionality is conveyed by the Chinese character *shu* meaning 'reciprocity' a virtue of the Earth Element associated with integrity in relationship. Only a person of character will have the integrity and courage to find compassion in hearing the truth about herself.

‘...for us most fortunate, truth is far more potent for rectifying the heart than compassion which, for many, has become a narcotic and just another way to avoid facing what must be faced for the sake of moving ahead.’

It is easy to understand why the old teachings emphasised compassion in a world in which the average lifespan was 30 years old. It strikes me that the average practitioner and consumer of Chinese medicine in the West exists in an entirely different demographic than those who practised or partook of our medicine historically. We are the most fortunate people to have ever lived, having more options than royalty ever did. We have the most religious, social, financial, and political freedom, and the best nutrition and healthcare of any people in human history. In light of this fact, I wonder if facing the truth about ourselves for the sake of creating a more wholesome world might not be a more significant and compelling motivation for us than having compassion as a primary goal? This inquiry has everything to do with the Fire Element. Why? Because for us most fortunate, truth is far more potent for rectifying the heart than compassion which, for many, has become a narcotic and just another way to avoid facing what must be faced for the sake of moving ahead.

Unfortunately, notions of compassion are often confused with new age ideas of ‘unconditional love’ and non-judgment. While compassion is certainly a wonderful virtue to have for others, I find it an interesting

contemplation to consider what part of ourselves *wants* compassion from others? What kind of person thinks s/he deserves to be loved, or feels compelled to love, ‘no matter what’? Many practitioners hide out in the notion of ‘compassion’ to avoid confronting patients with their lack of integrity relative to their stated clinical goals. Such behaviour is always predicated on a lack of willingness to really confront one’s self. Correct use of the word ‘integral’, in regard to medicine, is always wholly implicating of one’s own integrity.

Notes and references

- 1 For example, all truth is relative, the rejection of hierarchy, and the idea that our ‘individual’ minds create ‘reality’
- 2 <http://revkirkley.blogspot.com/2006/07/necessary-compassion-inconvenient.html>

Lonny S Jarrett MAc is an author, practitioner, and teacher of Chinese medicine. He has been active in this field since 1980, teaching and publishing in leading professional journals. He holds masters degrees in both acupuncture and neurobiology and a fourth degree black belt in *tae kwon do*. A founding board member of the Acupuncture Society of Massachusetts, in 1993 he was elected as a Fellow of the National Academy of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. Lonny maintains his full-time acupuncture and herbal medicine practice in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. His current interest is in the potential of integral medicine to change culture. Lonny runs an online community and resource page for students and practitioners of Chinese medicine at nourishingdestiny.com

Patterns of disease in patient records

With impending regulation, **Annie Elliot** looks at the records kept by acupuncturists and asks, 'Are paper-based patient records fit for purpose?'



As a GP, I sat in front of my patients' computerised records and became increasingly aware that patterns of disease were emerging. I found myself asking why Mrs A should get indigestion under stress, but never headaches and Mr B get heavy legs as a part of his increasing tiredness without evidence of heart failure? These odd symptoms and their lack of explanation resulted in my arrival to study acupuncture in Reading in 2004.

Here I began to realise there were indeed connections, well explained through the mechanisms of pathophysiology in TCM. What I also realised was, the electronic patient records (EPR) I had mused over contained a wealth of easily accessible data to support the theories of TCM. I played around with computer searches on indigestion, finding stress was a coexisting diagnosis for a fair proportion of patients under thirty but not those over thirty. For the latter group, a BMI of greater than 27 was a more frequent link.

Now, we know that the patterns of disease presenting in Western medicine can be reframed in the Traditional Chinese model, but what I found more exciting was the rapid appearance of patterns in EPR and that these were available at the touch of a button! I was soon to discover that the same was not true

of acupuncture records! Ninety hours of clinical observation demonstrated that there was no easy means of gathering data, since practitioners were hanging on (with resilience) to paper-based records. This was fodder for a dissertation! What reason might there be for failure to adopt a computerised system with such advantages? Was the attitude of the patients or practitioners a hindrance to its introduction?



Set in the context of regulation, this question had even more relevance. Unsure of the likely requirements for this process, I mooted that it might mirror the trends set by conventional medicine. As such, reflective practice in the form of audit would be likely to play a fundamental role. Fitter et al¹ suggest that audit activity among acupuncturists was at 'such an insignificant level as to be worthless'. Bovey² maintains that audit is too 'time consuming' to easily engage practitioners, whilst Andrews and Booth³ suggest that the current text-based system may be 'unfit for purpose'. I found them to be on my side!

A literature search confirmed that there was little evidence for the use of computers in acupuncture practice, but much in other

healthcare settings. Western medicine in the UK has seen the introduction of a Department of Health-sponsored record system and an accompanying 50% reduction in medical errors. It has also provided the means for the introduction of evidence-based systems and protocols.⁴ The inevitable arguments over security have been outweighed by the need to develop a more standardised approach to record keeping in an increasingly fractured deliverance of healthcare.

My research took the form of a questionnaire sent to 50 patients and 50 practitioners (of mixed traditions). To summarise, these observations were made of the **practitioners**:

- Computer use did not correlate with practitioner experience or the number of patients seen, but was more likely in a Western acupuncture practice.
- Preprinted records made audit more likely, but the consideration of use of computers less so, suggesting that facilitated data gathering was a must if audit was required.
- 33% of practitioners felt that the evidence gathered by audit was unimportant. As a result only 16.7% of the sample was carrying out any audit.
- When asked if regulation would impact on the need to audit, 47.6% of the sample thought this likely. However, only 43% would change their method of record keeping if this were so.
- 76.7% of practitioners would not use a computer during a consultation. Issues relating to the potential loss of rapport seemed to be the root cause.
- Although GPs hold the most complete EPR, only 60% of acupuncturists felt that access to this information would improve their patient management. Practitioners as a whole thought EPR might improve safety.

Patients' attitudes were slightly different:

- Patients were able to accept the use of computers as a part of contemporary and safe practice and only 27.1% had concerns. They thought EPR would improve safety.

- 78% were willing to share their general practice computer records.
- Patients were also more likely to accept the use of computers as a part of the consultation (83.1% patients vs 20% practitioners answered positively).
- Patients were in favour of computerised records to improve consistency and continuity and 50% felt that they would be a part of future practice.
- Finally, patients were more likely than their practitioners to feel that computerisation might produce evidence to support the use of acupuncture (61% vs only 30%).

The results highlight strong negativity amongst acupuncture professionals which is not shared by their patients. Patients feel that a safer more continuous practice might result from the use of computerised records. Perhaps this is something that we all need to take note of, whether or not regulation enforces the process of computerisation.

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- ⁴ Burton LC, Anderson GF, Kues IW, 'Using electronic health records to help coordinate care', *Milbank Quarterly*, 2004, Vol 82, No 3, pp 457–81

Annie Elliot is a GP with 30 years' experience of NHS practice. She divides her working time between practising acupuncture, being a GP, appraisal and clinical governance within the NHS and teaching at College as programme leader for conventional medical sciences.

Weathering the credit crunch

Honora Lee Wolfe has fifteen tips to help you survive (or thrive!) during an economic downturn



If we want to do well in business even in times of a poor economy, we must first understand that it does absolutely no good to complain to people about tough times.

When we complain about how bad business is, people may sympathise but cannot do anything to help us and, more disastrously, our brain and the universe gets the message we just sent and responds accordingly. So, instead of complaining to colleagues, clients, or even to yourself, get busy! Chances are the untapped profit in your existing customer relationships is much bigger than any economic downturn. You just have to work creatively to find better ways to tap into those relationships.

Below are several ideas to help us all get through difficult financial times. Not every idea will resonate with every practitioner who reads this. Some won't pertain to you. However, if you implement one, two, or three of the ideas that are relevant to your practice, I can almost guarantee that business will improve.

1 Call your patients, especially those that have not been in for a while. This may sound ridiculously simple, but I find that few practitioners do it, usually because it feels scary. However, I say, would you rather have

butterflies in your stomach, or would you prefer to go out of business? So write yourself a script to use so that you don't become tongue-tied. Ask how they are since they last came in. Ask if they are having any stress-related symptoms because of the economic situation. Tell them that you know times are tough and you have several treatment plans to save them money if they want to come in to see you (package deals, family discounts, a free birthday treatment, half-price treatments for anyone who has lost their job, deferred payment plans, and so on). If you don't have any clients for an afternoon, you can sit and bite your fingernails, or try to make one or two more appointments.

2 Ask for referrals For those patients who are coming in, create incentives for them to send a friend or family member. An incentive could be attend five treatments, get one free – with an 'offer ends' date. Whatever you do to show your gratitude (depending upon the legal limitations that you may have) you will get more referrals from patients if you ask for them than if you don't. Put up a sign that says 'My business thrives from your referrals. They are the highest compliment you can give me.'

3 Do a real budget if you don't already have one. What expenses are fixed and which ones are discretionary? What supplier

contracts could be renegotiated? This includes credit card interest rates, phone rates and plans, possibly your rent, and every other vendor from whom you purchase anything. What other ways could you cut expenses without sacrificing good service? One practitioner I know changed her schedule to three 12-hour days and rented out her space two days per week to someone else. She saves on commuting expenses as well as rent, and her patient population responded well to the night hours.

4 Collect on old accounts If anyone owes you money, try to get it. Negotiate a payment plan with them even if they can only pay five pounds per week.

5 Develop new relationships If you have time on your hands, look for a useful volunteer opportunity that will connect you to as many people as possible in your community. This could be coaching a girls football team, the local hospital auxiliary fund-raising committee, a community foodshare organisation, a 10k race to raise funds for breast cancer. The possibilities are endless, but should be related to the type of patient that you want to attract. If the work is event-specific, when it is over send out a thank you card to everyone you worked with that includes your business card and tells them that you don't know if they might ever need your services, but you'd be happy to speak to them if they are ever in need of healthcare.

6 Create a new service What portion of the possible market are you not serving? Could you take a class, read a book, or

somehow get up to speed in a new market? For example, if you treat women, remember that a mother will go to almost any lengths to help a sick child. Pediatrics might be a good way to expand. Or, if you want to go for a more upscale market, aesthetic acupuncture (facelifts) can be a great direction to go. You can even market this service as being far less invasive than going under the knife!

7 Sharpen your skills Take a survey of your treatments over the last year to determine how many of your patient interactions were as successful as you would want. Look at this as honestly as you can stand. Could you do better? Then think about when was the last time you really studied the medicine? When was the last time you read a book on Chinese medicine. We must never assume we know everything we need to know. Decide to get better at one thing... just one thing, and find the resources to do that. You'll be surprised at how the universe will respond.

8 Rededicate yourself to concentrating on giving incomparable service People recognise excellence when they see it. I know one successful acupuncturist whose business has grown in the last few months. Her secret to success is that every patient she sees absolutely knows, every time, that she is completely and totally *there* for them every minute. No distractions, no self-centeredness, no excuses. She dedicates every minute when there is no patient to studying the medicine. She is an extremely competent practitioner and her focus is always on her patients and the medicine, full stop.

9 **Rethink your marketing plan** Do you even have a marketing plan? If not, or if you have not thought about this for some time, find ways to do outreach that cost you little or nothing. For example, look in the local paper's community news section to find every organisation that is having a meeting in the coming week. Contact them and offer to give a free lecture at an upcoming meeting. Find a hook that relates to their interests. For example, a cycling club could be interested in improving recovery times from races or other events; a book club could be interested in improved eyesight. Fibromyalgia, diabetes, heart disease, or other disease support groups are also obvious choices. You might also volunteer as a local radio health talk-show host.

10 If you don't like to do public speaking, for whom can you **write articles**? Local group newsletters and monthly publications, company intranet newsletters, and newsletters for any of your patients' clubs, groups, and associations are obvious places to start. (Do your patients know you'd be happy to write articles about Chinese medicine for their organisation, club, or company's newsletters?) Of course an **email newsletter** to all your own patients is cheap, fast, and easy to do. It only needs to be a few hundred words on a seasonal or 'in-the-news' topic and at the same time you can announce special offers, classes, updates on recent classes that you took or new services you are offering. And, it's a way to keep you in your patient's mind.

11 **Recreate a fantastic intake procedure** that builds your credibility. Use charts to locate pain and discuss how acupuncture can treat it. Show new patients how pain in one area is connected to other parts of the body. A picture is worth a thousand words and, used well, they can make you look really smart and skilled.

12 On calls from prospective patients tell the patient something like, 'Why don't you come in for a **free consultation** and we'll discuss your problem. Then I'll let you know if I can help you. If I can't, I'll try to make some suggestions for you. If I can, we'll talk about what the treatment would be like and you can decide if this is the type of care you wish to pursue.' These few sentences do a lot:

- Convince the person to come in without hard selling.
- Establish a basis of trust – tell them the truth, even if it's that acupuncture isn't for them.
- Avoid the 'When you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail' syndrome.
- Establish yourself as an authority in their minds.

13 To elaborate on this, go through every aspect of **how your practice operates**.

- Does your phone get answered promptly and intelligently with each and every call? Have a friend call and ask a few questions of your front desk staff and give you feedback on their experience.
- Is your paperwork clean and easy to understand?



as a group,
since several
heads are always
better than one.

My main point here is that, while you cannot control the economy or your competition, you can control both your internal and external response to the economy. Start with your attitude, by consciously making the decision to refuse to participate in a recession. Then work at developing your networking skills, reviewing your practice systems and operations, revising your marketing plan, and updating your skills to keep your business as strong as possible. You don't have to allow a bad economy be your excuse for failure. Instead, make it your opportunity to succeed. While others are looking at the problems, looking for opportunities will not only get you through a bad economy but may allow you to prosper.

I wish everyone who reads this article many blessings for success. If you have come up with an idea that helps you survive and thrive in this difficult time, please share it with me to pass along to other practitioners and students. Thanks for reading.

Honora Lee Wolfe DiplAc, has owned or operated four different businesses since 1976 and has been practising acupuncture since 1988. She is the author of *Points for Profit: The Essential Guide to Practice Success for Acupuncturists*. She teaches classes throughout the US and Europe. You can email her at honora@bluepoppy.com

- Is your first appointment with each patient well planned?
- Are your front desk staff well trained?
- Are your directions to the practice easy to follow?
- Is your history taking and physical exam competent and lovingly approached without taking all day?
- Are your explanations of acupuncture and Chinese medicine clear, understandable and well rehearsed?
- Do you have good information to send home with new patients that help you 'close the deal' on becoming your patient?

14 **Don't panic** Remember that a recession is a slow down, not a stop sign. If you are anxiety-ridden, you cannot give the best quality care and you will make yourself sick as well! Remember the wise words of the Dalai Lama, which go something like this: 'Worry does not help anything. If you can do something about a problem, then do it and don't worry. If you cannot do anything about a problem, then there is no point in worrying.' In our case, there are, absolutely, things we can do about our problem. So make a list of the things you can do and, to quote the Nike advertisements, 'just do it'. No excuses, no delays, no whining.

15 Also, please know that the suggestions I have listed here are not exhaustive. Go to websites like entrepreneur.com; sign up for marketing e-newsletters; talk to other practitioners about how you all might help each other and what marketing you could do

Five blocks to treating the shen

Angie Hicks shows how the presence of pathology can overshadow the treatment of our patients' mind-spirit



When patients feel depressed, confused, isolated or anxious, acupuncture sometimes has an almost magical effect. Patients frequently get off the couch feeling transformed – treatment has touched the patients' spirit.

'In order to make acupuncture thorough and effective one must first cure the spirit' Su Wen, chapter 25

Although one-off treatments can have a dramatic effect most people need longer-term care before they are truly well. Ongoing treatment can help people to feel more alive, at ease, centred or more able to move forward in their lives.

The table below lays out some signs of a **healthy** and **unhealthy spirit**.

Blocks to treating the spirit

Treating the spirit of the Organ is one way to touch a patient's spirit.^{1, 2} I have noticed, however, that there can also be a secondary component involved in the diagnosis of mind-spirit problems that doesn't always show up at the beginning of treatment. This is a pathogen that has arisen because of the original weakness. Overlooking this obstruction can hold up the progress of treatment.

The **five most common blocks** are:

- Blood stagnation
- Qi stagnation
- Phlegm
- Damp
- Heat

Observable signs	Healthy spirit	Unhealthy spirit
Eyes	Bright and shiny	Dull
Posture	Upright	Slumped
Vitality	Buoyant and full	Poor
Thinking	Focused, clear and flexible	Unfocused, muddled, inflexible
Language	Positive; I can or I will	Negative; I can't or I won't
Beliefs and values	I am a valuable person; I have a reason for being here; I belong	I feel worthless, useless; I don't belong; I can't do this
Identity	I am comfortable and contented with myself	I am not comfortable and I feel dissatisfied with myself

In this article I will focus on Phlegm and Blood stagnation, as they are commonly neglected. Discussion about *qi* stagnation, Damp and Heat will be woven into the text.

Mild problems

Some of these obstructions are commonly found in patients with extreme mind or spirit problems. For example, Phlegm Misting the Heart and Heart Blood stagnation can be at the root of psychosis.³

Over and over again, however, I find that these pathologies are also commonly found in patients with less extreme symptoms. For instance, some people may be slightly agitated, have difficulty in adapting to changes or become slightly fuzzy mentally due to mild Heat, Blood stagnation or Phlegm.

The more subtle the obstruction, the more difficult it can be to recognise. Its presence, however, may still hold up the progress of treatment. Blood stagnation may be one of the most difficult to recognise.

Blood stagnation and 'exiled' symptoms

Blood stagnation has been described as 'the unsmooth, hindered or choked up circulation of Blood'.⁴ Causes include Blood deficiency, *qi* deficiency and Heat in the Blood.

Blood stagnation that obstructs the mind-spirit often occurs after an extreme shock, abuse or trauma. Examples can be sexual abuse, miscarriage, suicide, rape, sudden death, divorce or severe trauma such as a beating or accident.⁵ In some cases there has

been a series of shocks, in others a sudden one-off event.

The *qi* and Blood is stopped in its tracks and the patient becomes emotionally 'frozen' by the trauma. It may be so traumatic that if it is not dealt with, it may be **exiled** from the person's awareness.

Progress of treatment

One important key to diagnosing Blood stagnation that obstructs the mind-spirit is its hidden quality. *Patients may have no obvious signs and symptoms*, which of course makes it difficult to diagnose. These victims often suffer in silence. They may limit their lives as a result of the trauma. The only way they feel able to deal with it is by shutting the memory out of consciousness.

When these patients come for treatment their story may not match how they appear. They've been through a terrible time but on the outside they seem unaffected. The trauma is rarely the presenting problem and the patient may not discuss it until trust has been built with the practitioner. A warning signal can be if she or he says 'it's like it happened to someone else' indicating that the problem has become 'ring-fenced' and shut away.

After initial improvement from treatment, progress may come to a halt. Treatment has hit on the trauma but the patient is numb to it.

Detecting the obstruction

Blood stagnation is known to cause pain. This kind of Blood stagnation creates more spiritual pain than physical pain but physical pain may also be present. For example,

patients who have suffered sexual abuse or rape may have abdominal or period pains. Patients who have had an emotional shock, may have angina or heart pain. Abused patients who could not express anger may have hypochondriac pain. These are only examples and everyone is different.

Sometimes the patient has no conscious memory of the trauma. The patient knows something is wrong but can't reach it. The memory has been blotted out. In this case pulse and tongue may be key to the diagnosis. Pulses may be choppy or wiry and the tongue may be purple or have purple patches. Another tongue sign can be distended veins on the underside of the tongue – a hidden area that we can easily overlook!⁶

Treatment to resolve Blood stagnation

Dealing with Blood stagnation as soon as possible is one key to successful treatment and may save many years of future pain. Acupuncture moves *qi*, and *qi* moves Blood – so most acupuncture can help. Initially dealing with the shock and keeping the *qi* and Blood moving may be central to treatment.

A lot of these patients have had Blood stagnation for many years and resolving the problem may therefore take some time. It is important for patient and practitioner to work together.

Well-known points to move Blood generally can be helpful. These include Sp 10, the Sea of Blood, Bl 17 the special (*hui*) point for Blood and Liv 3 to move *qi*.

It may also be useful to move Blood with local points. Entry and exit points can also

help to move *qi* through a specific area, for example, Liv 13, Liv 14 and Lu 1 through the Liver, and Sp 21 and Ht 1 through the Heart. The *chong mai* (also known as the Sea of Blood) can also be extremely helpful for some patients and the *yin wei mai* for helping people to overcome what seem like irresolvable traumas. The Internal Dragons is another valuable treatment for both Blood stagnation and Phlegm and I will discuss this later.

People with exiled symptoms may need additional help alongside acupuncture treatment. For example, body orientated psychotherapy or bodywork can make it possible for the person to safely and gently make contact with the trauma and release it. Most trauma of this type is literally held in the body.

The patient does not have to re-experience the trauma to release it. When the trauma has cleared, however, the patient will feel mentally and spiritually released as well as physically. Talking about a problem tends not to deal with it. These kinds of traumas should always be handled with great care. Patients may need long-term treatment before they fully recover.

Other treatments

My *qi gong* teacher uses a system of ‘dissolving’ that can be useful to release acute shock and trauma. To do this, people feel their body sensations from head to foot dissolving or releasing the trauma as they go. He says that if this can be done at the time of a trauma it can completely release the ‘freezing’ and clear it from the body.⁷ Chinese herbs can also be useful.⁸

Progression from a disturbing life event to serious disease



Case history

A patient came for treatment for premenstrual tension. During the case history she revealed that she had been abused as a child and now felt quite depressed and unsure of herself. As treatment progressed it became apparent that the abuse had caused her to limit her life considerably, especially in her relationships. On the surface she led a normal life. For a while the only treatment that helped her was the Internal Dragons.⁹ With this treatment she felt some things from her past release. Her constitutional imbalance seemed to be in her Liver but most treatment appeared to make very little difference. Finally the practitioner decided to move Blood alongside constitutional treatment. This gradually made a difference. The patient reported feeling clearer. Some rigid behaviours to do with relationships began to ease. She could sleep better and had fewer nightmares. Treatment continues and moving Blood has had great benefits.

cancer may have something hidden away that they are unable to talk about or express. This could be a secret or something they feel is shameful that is literally stagnating inside them. Revealing the 'secret' is often the first step to improvement.¹⁰

The emotional suppression caused by holding the secret causes *qi* stagnation and this can develop into Blood stagnation. Blood stagnation may then be the cause of serious diseases (see diagram above).

People are often shocked and surprised at the diagnosis of cancer or other serious illnesses. Of course there are many causes but in some cases this might be an important one to consider.

Case history

A patient came for treatment for headaches that she had twice a week. They were giving her 'hell'. They were all over her head and treatment on Organs such as the Liver and Spleen didn't help. After she had the Internal Dragon points they stopped immediately. Only after the headaches stopped did she admit that she had talked to herself incessantly about her divorce but she couldn't confide to anyone else about how painful it had been. Acupuncture treatment had unlocked her ability to talk about the pain and by clearing the stagnation we can surmise that it may have prevented more serious illness in the future.

The progression of *qi* stagnation to Blood stagnation

Cancer and other serious conditions may be due to Blood stagnation that has arisen from *qi* stagnation.

There are many reasons for cancer occurring and often a number of aetiologies come together when illness is severe. It is worth considering that some patients with

Phlegm – clouded insight

Psychosis and extreme confusion are commonly associated with Phlegm misting the spirit. I often see a small amount of Phlegm ‘misting’ the spirit in patients who do not have extreme symptoms. These patients often have a slightly muzzy head and some confusion. Not enough confusion to stop them functioning, but enough that they seem vague and find it difficult to be specific or keep to the point. Most importantly they are usually unaware of this. As we might expect, the patient often has slippery pulses and a fairly thick tongue coat but sometimes these are not as marked as we might expect.

Patients with Phlegm are usually unaware of their cloudy head and muzziness. Only after the phlegm has been cleared will patients with Phlegm notice how much clearer and better they feel.

Phlegm arises for many reasons, including diet. When Phlegm mists the Heart, however, I have wondered if unshed tears from emotional distress contribute towards an accumulation of fluids around the heart and this coagulates to become Phlegm.

Treatment to clear Phlegm

One of the most common point combinations is St 40 and PC 5 to clear the Phlegm. Additional points can be, PC 6 and St 8. The underlying imbalance must also be treated and it can arise from any Organ. The Heart is commonly a primary underlying imbalance, but it can be the Liver and Spleen with the Lung and Kidney coming close behind.

Case history

A patient came to the student clinic with infertility. She had a Fire constitutional imbalance. After initially feeling better she came in saying she felt quite anxious. She also developed a thicker tongue coat. The student practitioner cleared Phlegm from the Heart and the following week the patient came back reporting that she felt an improvement. After two more treatments clearing Phlegm, the tongue coat had cleared and she felt very much better. She realised that her thoughts had been escalating out of control but previously hadn't noticed it. Once the Phlegm had been cleared there was no recurrence of her symptoms and she continued to feel better.

Phlegm versus Damp

Many practitioners find it difficult to tell the difference between Damp and Phlegm. Damp can also obstruct the spirit. Phlegm and Damp do have many similarities – both arise from stuck body fluids, both can be sticky in nature and both can cause a person to feel muzzy headed and unclear. Damp, however, is different from Phlegm. Patients with Damp often have insight into their problems. Those with Phlegm are more likely to lack this clarity.

One other difference between Phlegm and Damp affecting the mind-spirit is that Damp is heavy. It tends to create depression and despondency. This causes the patient to lack motivation, procrastinate, feel stuck and easily become bored. Phlegm can also create depression but the patient has more mental confusion. Damp is also lingering and dirty. A person with Damp can sometimes

be described as ‘messy’. One apt description suggests that ‘this messiness permeates all areas of life, the desk will be cluttered, the room untidy and the car full of all sorts of things that never got cleaned away’.¹¹

Heat and Fire – agitation

The final pathogen is Heat. Heat can combine with many of the pathogens discussed above. This may cause, for example, Heat in the Blood, Phlegm-Heat or Damp-Heat. Sometimes when a patient has anxiety, panic and insomnia, the patient is diagnosed as having *yin* or Blood deficiency. The real cause, which is Full Heat, is overlooked.

Other symptoms can be restlessness, agitation, feeling hot and fast speech and movements. Take special note of whether the patient finds it difficult to settle, as this may be a key sign. Full rapid pulses and a red tongue may confirm the diagnosis. If the Heart is affected, the pulse may be overflowing on the front positions.

Recreational drugs such as ecstasy or amphetamines can cause Full Heat. Another cause can be a troubled relationship or other emotional traumas such as extreme anger or frustration. Once the Heat is cleared the agitation and inability to settle disappears and the underlying imbalance can be dealt with more easily.

Internal Dragons

Finally it may be useful to note that the treatment known as the Internal Dragons can have an remarkable effect on many

obstructions to the spirit. Along with its many other uses we might surmise that it can clear ‘psychic’ Phlegm and Blood stagnation. I have found many times that patients who have exiled symptoms or a veiling of their spirit have been helped tremendously by the use of these points.

Common symptoms of the five blocks

Pathogen	Other mental/spiritual symptoms
Blood stagnation	Exiled symptoms. Feels like it happened to someone else. Aspects of life are limited. Symptoms don't match 'story'.
Phlegm	Clouded insight, vagueness, can't keep to the point, muzzy head.
Qi stagnation	Mood swings, depression, tense muscles, sighing, irritability.
Damp	Depression and despondency, lack of motivation, tendency to procrastinate, feels stuck, easily bored, messy.
Heat/Fire	Restlessness, agitation, rapid speech and movements, inability to settle.

This article is not intended to provide a definitive account of these pathogens – rather it provides a different perspective on them.



Summary – tips for practitioners

- Acupuncture has an exceptional ability to treat many mind-spirit problems. In general treatment on the underlying Organ, especially using spirit points, will be enough to deal with the mind-spirit.
- Sometimes obstructions to the mind-spirit can occur. These are most commonly Blood stagnation, Phlegm, *qi* stagnation, Damp and Heat.
- Look out for these obstructions when treatment seems to be blocked or progressing slowly.
- Also consider obstructions when patients seem to be out of touch with themselves physically or psychologically.

Notes and references

- 1 We may call this the Liver spirit, Heart spirit, Lung spirit and so on, or we can use the term 'the five *shen*' (spirits) which are the *shen*, *hun*, *po*, *zhi* and *yi*. As the word *shen* can translate as 'mind' or 'spirit' I will call it the mind-spirit in this article
- 2 For more about the spirits of the Organ see Hicks A, Hicks J, Mole P, *Five Element Constitutional Acupuncture*, Churchill Livingstone, 2004
- 3 Phlegm is often at the root of psychosis, but we can also consider Blood stagnation. See Neeb G, *Blood Stasis*, Churchill Livingstone, 2007, pp 19 and 246
- 4 Al-Khafaji Mazin, Stasis of Blood, JCM, no 32, January 1990, pp 5–9
- 5 Some of these patients may have a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder
- 6 See Neeb G, *Blood Stasis*, Churchill Livingstone, 2007, pp 38–42
- 7 Discussed by Bruce Frantzis at an Inner Dissolving seminar, California, 2005
- 8 For more see Lloyd K, 'Psyche and Substance', *European Journal of Oriental Medicine*, Vol 2, No 5, Summer 1998
- 9 For more on the Internal Dragons treatment see Hicks, A, Hicks, J, Mole, P, *Five Element Constitutional Acupuncture*, Churchill Livingstone, 2004, p 236
- 10 Discussed by Bruce Frantzis at an Inner Dissolving seminar, California, 2005
- 11 Scheid V, 'A New Look at Some Old Evils', *Traditional Acupuncture Society Journal*, No 7, April 1990

Angie Hicks is co-founder and joint principal of the College of Integrated Chinese Medicine. An acupuncturist since 1976, she is also a Chinese herbalist and author/co-author of books including *Five Element Constitutional Acupuncture*, *Healing your Emotions* and *The Acupuncture Handbook*. She is especially interested in body-based therapies, *qi gong*, meditation and Focusing.

The Heart and shock (jing)

Peter Mole highlights this underrated cause of disease



Shock (*jing*) is a remarkably common cause of disease. It can affect people very differently but there are common characteristics which are worth being clear about so that we can recognise it and treat it effectively. In my experience acupuncture is extraordinarily effective at helping patients recover from shock.

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is holding a rod. This signifies authority. In contrast to these images of stillness, at the bottom is the radical for a horse, which symbolises a person's inability to keep their thinking and will steady.

Unlike the characters for all the other internal causes of disease, there is no Heart radical, reflecting the fact that shock is not truly an emotion like anger, fear or sadness.

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Su Wen chapter 39 describes how the Heart is the organ that is primarily affected.

'When there is starting with shock the Heart no longer has a place to rely on. The shen no longer has a place to refer to; planned thought no longer has a place to settle. This is how the qi is in disorder (*luan*)' *Su Wen, chapter 39*

Charles Dickens described the effects of the severe shock he experienced in a terrible train crash. 'For several weeks there was no such thing as "I" in my knowledge. I was not I.'

As the *Su Wen* says, it seems that the *shen* truly 'no longer had a place to refer to.'



Charles Dickens, pictured around the time of the 1865 train crash in which he experienced severe shock. Although only 52 he subsequently never wrote another major work

'What ails this Heart of mine?'

The distinguishing attribute of shock is its sudden nature. Whether the shock is physical, such as in an accident or surgery, or an emotional trauma, it seems to have an almost identical effect on the person's *qi* and Blood.

The Heart has a protector, the *xin bao*, or Pericardium. This acts as a bodyguard to safeguard it from the internal and external pathogens to which the Heart is especially vulnerable.

When pathogens attack the Heart the onset is often not particularly sudden. There is time for the Pericardium to carry out its protective function. Macioia describes how 'In herbal medicine, the Pericardium is usually only referred to in the context of infectious diseases caused by exterior Heat'. In these situations the Pericardium bears the brunt of the attack on the Heart.

However the Heart and the *shen* usually show signs of being affected to some degree. In mild fevers people find it hard to concentrate or read a book but in high fevers they may have a phase of being delirious. As the *Su Wen* says, 'planned thought no longer has a place to settle'.

But our patients seldom have fevers of that intensity, partly due to the use of drugs like paracetomol, aspirin or antibiotics. In my experience when patients are struggling to recover their vitality, stamina and sparkle after any kind of fever, it is the Pericardium and its paired Organ, the Triple Burner, that

have usually been the most affected. The Fire Element is depleted, their colour is often more lacking in red than usual and they are markedly less joyful and vibrant. Treatment to stimulate the Pericardium and the Triple Burner is usually extremely effective.

The Pericardium usually also has time to protect the Heart against its other great scourge, sadness (*bei*). Excess joy (*xi le*) always seems trivial as a cause of disease compared to the huge numbers of patients we see whose Fire Element has been devastated and depleted by sadness and loneliness.

The Pericardium is much more effective at protecting the Heart against other causes of disease, e.g. Heat, and the emotions of sadness and excess joy, than it is against shock.

Shock

Many patients have had traumas and shocks earlier in their lives that have adversely affected their *qi* and Blood. The emotional enormity of some events in a person's life is such that the person never fully recovers, never 'gets over' the shock. The *qi* 'scatters' and never becomes whole again.

In the short term the Heart is most affected but, over time, shock often leads to disharmony between the Heart and the Kidneys, the Fire Element and the Water Element. Zhang Jiebin wrote: 'With shock the spirits are frightened, and they disperse... Heart and Kidneys receive the attack.'

Patterns, such as Kidney and Heart not harmonised and Kidney *yin* deficient, Empty Fire Blazing, Develop. These patterns are commonly seen when patients have suffered abuse or been exposed to excessive melodrama in childhood. They may of course also develop as a result of traumatic events later in life.

Many patients come to see us who have experienced some form of shock since the last visit. They often do not tell us about it

as they do not realise that it has affected their health at all. But as *Su Wen* says ‘the *qi* is in disorder (*luan*)’ and they often present with new symptoms that can be of almost any description. Symptoms that arise from dysfunction of the Heart, such as insomnia, feelings of panic or emotional volatility are obviously common. Sudden onset of several seemingly unconnected symptoms, affecting different Organs, sometimes indicates that shock has ‘scattered’ the *qi*. An extraordinary tiredness often continues for days or weeks.

Su Wen chapter 39 says that shock ‘scatters’ the *qi*. This rapidly leads to devastation of the Heart Blood. The effects of shock often take the form of extreme Heart Blood deficiency such as a dull pale face, or disturbed *shen*.

It is relatively easy to discern that shock has affected a patient if they report experiencing some form of physical or emotional trauma since their last visit. Surgery is a common form of shock to the person’s *qi*. But how does the practitioner realise that shock has affected the Heart when the patient does not volunteer that any form of upset or trauma has occurred?

When the symptoms may not obviously be associated with the Heart?

The tongue usually does not change in the short term, so the pulse is crucial. The Heart pulse is often ‘choppy’, ‘minute’, or in more extreme cases, ‘spinning bean’. If one of these qualities is felt it is best to stimulate H 7 or, if this fails to remove the quality, to stimulate H 1, H 5 or the back *shu* point of the Heart, Bl 15. Stimulating the Heart’s paired Organ, the Small Intestine, often also helps. It is crucial to remove the quality or the patient will not thrive.

The *qi* of other Organs and Elements can also be disturbed. This partly depends on the person’s constitutional weaknesses but also on the impact of other emotions resulting from the trauma.

I once had a patient whose headaches and lethargy responded well to treatment. I was seeing her on a six-weekly basis. Then she began to report a return of symptoms that, to our disappointment, failed to respond to treatment principles which had worked well before. In the end she said she didn’t think things had been right since she’d had a car crash some months previously. Somewhat belatedly I treated her Heart and she returned to her former state of good health.

I saw a patient last month who was in much lower spirits than normal, very tearful and unusually despairing about not being in a relationship. Unusually for her she could hardly bear to look me in the eye. She said she had been feeling like this for about ten days.

Her Heart pulse, which was usually one of her better pulses, was very choppy. I asked her if she’d had a shock and at first she said she hadn’t. When pressed she recalled a nasty fall from her bike about ten days previously. I stimulated her Heart using H 7 and asked her to ring me a few days later. When she rang she said the treatment had been ‘magic’.

These two examples concerned patients who had experienced physical shock. Common as these are, many more patients come to us suffering the results of emotional shock. Acupuncture can bring great relief to many of these patients, supporting their recovery, and enabling them to return to their previous level of wellbeing.

Peter Mole is Dean of the College of Integrated Chinese Medicine. An acupuncture practitioner in Oxford since 1978, he has been teaching for over twenty five years, first in Leamington Spa and since 1993 at the College here in Reading. He is the author of a book for the general public, *Acupuncture for Body, Mind and Spirit*, and co-author with Angela and John Hicks, of the textbook *Five Element Constitutional Acupuncture*.



The importance of feedback in healing

Six months ago I started working with a new client. He had just been told that he probably had four to six months to live because of the form of cancer that had just been discovered in him. This news came as a complete shock to him, and when he asked was there anything he could do the doctors said, 'Not really'. Six months have passed – and so far, so good. He has been consistently proactive in exploring possible ways to promote his health, feels stronger and has more energy than previously.

However, a fundamental question has arisen and it is one that affects every healing relationship for both practitioner and patient. The question he has been grappling with is, 'How would I know if what I am doing is tipping the scales in my favour?' When I suggested that he ask his physicians he was astonished that they said it was very hard to tell. No reliable feedback mechanism could be offered. Which leaves my client with no answer to two key questions: 'How do I know if I'm making things better – or, indeed, worse?' and 'How do I know if I'm on the right track?'

Being able to track how we are doing is fundamental to being able to promote healing. That's why, this issue, I want to focus on **feedback**.

Some feedback is instant. Touch the hot plate and you immediately recoil. Quite often, though, we experience what is known as **delayed feedback**. Some years ago my dental checkup revealed some inflammation in my gums. I was told what to do and I went away

and did it. Six months later I went back – and it was still the same. Obviously there was something I wasn't doing right here. I needed to shorten the feedback loop so that I could correct my behaviour much more quickly. For three months I saw the dental hygienist once a month. She was then able to make suggestions and the issue was completely resolved quickly. The tighter the feedback loop the more useful the feedback.

So if you think for a moment about your own patients, what feedback mechanisms do you have in place that enable you and them to know how they're doing? How tight are they? And are you educating them to look for – and use – feedback?

Feedback can be an incredibly powerful aid to healing in three different ways:

1 Feedback is a motivator One of my clients came to realise that drinking alcohol exacerbated the chronic pain he'd been experiencing from a car accident for five years. Suddenly he was powerfully motivated to stop drinking – and he began to experience less pain than he had known at any time for those five years.

2 Feedback is empowering This was the first time he had any indication that he could actually affect his level of pain. Now he didn't just feel on the receiving end of something over which he had no control.

3 Feedback can change beliefs Until then, he had not believed that the pain could be under his control at all. And he certainly didn't

believe his alcohol consumption affected his pain. I suggested to him that if he drank more than usual he would feel more pain. Eager to disprove my prediction he did so! That's how he first came to understand that he could influence his pain.

Learning to pay attention to feedback

Feedback comes in many forms. Objective feedback is not just medical tests. When a patient starts doing something different this too is feedback. And then there is subjective feedback – yours and theirs – which is virtually continuous. Most of the time it's not that there isn't any feedback, the question is:

- Do we recognise what is happening as feedback?
- Do we pay attention to it?
- Do we give it credence?
- Do we act on it?

Take **somatic responses**. Many people just don't pay much attention to them. Even when they do they often don't know what to make of them. Yawning is a great example. I was in a meeting recently with one of my staff who's very committed and has loads of energy. It's about 12.30 in the afternoon and I notice she's stifling a yawn, and another, and another. She's not bored and she's not tired. So I tell her how yawning often correlates with a drop in blood sugar and is a signal to eat. She didn't know this. Since that time she's learnt to eat when this happens with immediate benefits.

Our somatic responses are often invaluable forms of feedback and can even have predictive power. I know, for instance, that if I begin to get a kind of ache in my left ear I need to get more rest and ease off. If I don't, I'm much more likely to be susceptible to infection – which, of course, will force me to take more rest and ease off.

Many times my work has involved

encouraging people not only to pay attention but to take such feedback seriously and then act on it. Why does this matter? Because feedback is communication from you to yourself. In learning to pay attention to it we are learning to listen to the wisdom within.

So you might want to consider this question, 'What feedback mechanisms could you teach your patients which would support them in engaging with their own inner wisdom?'



Ian McDermott is an acknowledged authority on the application of NLP to health. Over the past 25 years he has created special NLP trainings around the world at the request of various professional bodies for health professionals. A prolific writer, he has co-authored some of the most widely read and respected books in the field, including *NLP and Health*, *The Art of Systems Thinking*, *Way of NLP*, *The NLP Coach*, *Your Inner Coach* and *The Coaching Bible*. He is the founder of International Teaching Seminars (ITS) which celebrates its twentieth anniversary this year. What has made ITS the most consistently successful NLP organisation in the world is its emphasis on the practical applications of NLP and the importance of personal congruence in implementing NLP. Ian spends much of his time training the next generation – of coaches and NLP practitioners. If you'd like to learn more about ITS Health Coaching or NLP training with Ian contact ITS direct via their website itsnlp.com.

fifteen treasures

Stephen Gascoigne



What is your idea of happiness?

Being with family and friends.

What is your greatest fear?

Heights. I feel dizzy on a thick carpet so don't ask me to go up a ladder.

How do you relax?

Not easily and not often! I love walking my dog, Oscar, my Irish wolfhound. My ideal relaxation would be sitting at a cafe in France watching the world go by!

Which living person do you most admire?

The Dalai Lama. Me and many others it seems. I saw him recently in Nottingham giving teachings and his mere presence is so inspiring.

What trait do you most deplore in yourself?

Impatience – with myself and with others.

What trait do you deplore in others?

I wish people would be more reasonable and see things my way!

What makes you depressed?

When I dwell too much on the negativity in the world today. It is important for me to seek positive energy and influences so that I can function efficiently.

What is your favourite smell?

Frying sausages. A very evocative memory from my childhood.

What is your favourite book?

The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying by Sogyal Rinpoche. It has been described as an 'owners'

manual' for the mind. A practical resource of great benefit in these troubled times.

For what cause would you die?

None that I can think of. No one should lose their life for a 'cause'. What a waste of a precious life.

When and where were you happiest?

I think – here and now. As I get older, I appreciate the present more and more.

What single thing would improve the quality of your life?

More time!

What keeps you awake at night?

Very little. Sometimes thinking about patients but this is unusual. I can usually switch off from patients when they leave the clinic.

How would you like to die?

At home, without too much suffering.

What is the most important lesson life has taught you?

Don't take things personally or too seriously.

Stephen Gascoigne originally qualified in medicine in 1976. He subsequently trained in acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine which he has practised for the past 25 years. He now works in and around Bath as well as teaching regularly, both Chinese medicine and aspects of conventional medicine to support practitioners of holistic medicine. He is particularly interested in supporting patients and practitioners searching for holistic approaches to serious illness.

Feeding our *qi*: summer

Why not make a refreshing cup of green tea, put your feet up for a moment and read the latest in **Danny Blyth's** series on Chinese food energetics?



Oh summer at last – long hot days of blissful sunshine; energy in abundance; picnics and barbecues aplenty; plants now in maximum growth and the lush greens of spring mellowing into the soft yellows of summer.

The heat of **summer** should of course be counterbalanced by an abundance of *yin* foods – especially **fruit** and **vegetables**. There is no shortage of great seasonal food now, and you only have to taste it to know that it contains more *qi* than the out-of-season, stored (to have both of these tends towards tautology), irradiated, over-packaged stuff that gets flown in from the four corners of the globe in cellophane-covered plastic cartons (I've just said over-packaged... oh dear, am I ranting already?). Food should be lightly cooked to preserve their *qi* – some raw food if your digestion can cope with it, or steamed, boiled or stir-fried (getting hotter in that order).

Surprisingly a small amount of spicy/hot food can also keep you cool, by encouraging sweating and bringing energy to the exterior (that's why I like a little **mustard** on my hot dog). Not too much, or you will disperse all of your *qi* through sweating, and overheat your system. Spicy/hot food can also be used as a counter-balance – for example a little fresh **ginger** juice with honey, apple juice and lime juice makes a great alternative to syrup for a fresh fruit salad. As well as aiding digestion it

gives it a bit of zing (or should it be *zang*?)

Another surprise is that lots of ice-cold sugary drinks don't cool you down. The energy it takes to warm those fluids up to body temperature creates more heat, and makes you hotter. That's why a nice cup of tea is so refreshing. Especially slightly bitter and cooling **green tea**. Use just a few leaves to keep it weak – never teabags. My personal favourite of the moment is Huang Shan Mao Feng. According to the packet is has 'an exquisite aroma and rich soothing taste' and 'leaves that resemble sparrows tongues'!

Green tea is given many great attributes in Chinese medicine – it brightens the eyes and sharpens vision, helps to clear Phlegm and improves the voice, aids digestion and helps flatulence, and is said to strengthen and invigorate the constitution. Nutritionists will tell you it is packed full of antioxidants that reduce ageing and help the immune system (if you don't put milk and three sugars in it). In herbal medicine it is used to open the channels and treat headaches.

The height of summer is related to the Fire Element, and hence to the bitter taste. Bitter tends to clear Heat, and have a reducing, descending nature (like green tea). In herbal medicine bitter herbs are used for full conditions, purging Heat and Damp through the bowels. **Lettuce** clears Heat from the Heart and has long been used as a folk remedy for poor sleep. **Celery** helps to strengthen the



Spleen and dry Dampness, as well as clearing Heat (from the urinary system, channels, skin and eyes), and extinguishing Wind (for instance for high blood pressure and headaches). And it is cheap – it is the main ingredient of ‘credit crunch’ – my latest salad creation.

As we move into **later summer**, the Earth Element has its turn, with the sweet taste. Now that's a hot potato if every I heard one (or is it a sweet potato?). Sweet-warms (**grains** and **vegetables**) tend to nourish the *qi*, whereas sweet-cools (most **fruit**) nourish *yin* and generate fluids, hence clearing Heat. All foods nourish, and have a degree of sweetness. It is most abundant in **grains, legumes, fruit, vegetables, nuts, meat, and dairy products**.

The sweet flavour also has a harmonising and softening nature, which works on a stuck Liver or an overactive Heart. Maybe this is the reason that ‘comfort eating’ is so widespread, and not just in people with a weak Spleen. Think of the craving for carbs and sugars that happens premenstrually, or at times of stress.

This can be used to our advantage in cooking – a little **honey** can round off a not-quite-right sauce and make Chinese herbs slightly more palatable! However, give a three-year-old a Mars bar, and harmonious and calm are not usually the right words to describe the resulting behaviour.

How do we explain this? The amazing Doctor and Daoist Zhu DanXi (1280–1358) noticed that people were mostly interested in overindulging in sex, food and drink. He said all that needs to be said about nutrition and healthy eating in his *Treatise on Eating Bland Food* (can you guess what it’s going to be about?). He described the five flavours found in fruit, vegetables, grains, and so on as being ‘gifts from Heaven’, and having ‘moderate and harmonious natures’. He contrasted this with food made by ‘human endeavour’ (brewing, blending and processing) which he

said 'contained toxins which damaged health and caused illness', of which sugar is a perfect example. So by 'bland food' he simply meant **unprocessed food**. Now more than ever the most important principle of healthy eating must be to eat food that you have cooked yourself from basic unprocessed ingredients. It is the only way to really know what you are eating. There is much talk now about vitamins, carotenoids, bioflavonoids and antioxidants for boosting the immune system, but it all basically boils down (or lightly steams down perhaps) to lots of fruit and vegetables!

The other thing that we instinctively know about summer is that heavy and rich foods are not good, and make you lethargic, heavy and sleepy. We naturally favour light, fresh food. Barbecuing doesn't really fit with this.

Apart from deep-frying something in batter (mmmmm!) barbecuing is the hottest way to cook food, and the smoke adds a small degree of toxicity. One way of dealing with this is to make the accompanying salads as delicious and tempting as possible to encourage people to actually eat some of them.

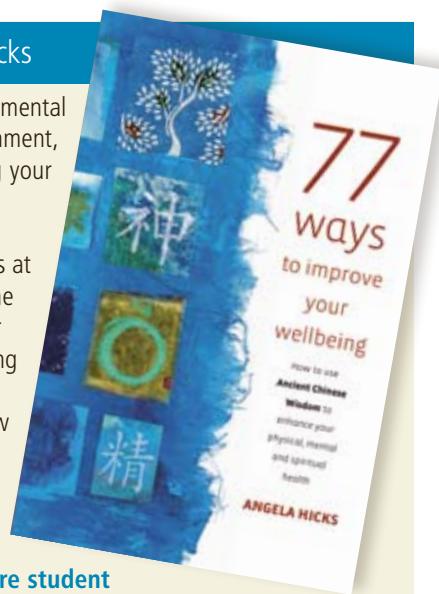
On the other hand, summer doesn't last for long. Throw me another of those chilled lagers will you!

Danny Blyth studied acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine at this College and has a post-graduate diploma in Chinese language. He practises in Cheltenham and the Cotswolds as well as teaching *tai chi* and *qi gong*. He also teaches here at the College. **See 2 Sept CPD event, p 38**

77 Ways to Improve your Wellbeing

Angela Hicks

This book takes you through key areas to improve your physical, mental and spiritual health; eating, exercising, work/life balance, environment, emotions and – most importantly – understanding and exploring your own specific requirements for health according to your individual needs. As a self-help book it certainly ticks the boxes in terms of motivation. We are encouraged not to take on too many changes at one time, to be gentle with ourselves if we fail, and to respect the one-month rule – the time it takes to integrate a change into our lives. Each tip is clearly explained in a motivating way, culminating with an action box summarising the steps to change. One of the book's strengths is that we are never left in any doubt about how we can bring about improvement and achieve our goals. Clearly it is written for a broad audience of people who are looking to stay healthy, or become healthier. With insights into our health in Chinese medicine terms, it could also entice would-be students to find out more. **Sally Hammerson, BSc Acupuncture student**





The mechanics of Daoist breathing



Master Bruce Frantzis repeatedly states that if there was one Daoist health art he could make common knowledge, it would be the art of breathing well. It is perhaps the easiest and most direct way to enable

practitioners to relax and release stress, especially anxiety, and to become more smooth and stable.

1 Sink your *qi*

When we relax, our energy sinks downwards. We calm down. We fall asleep. Sinking your energy downwards into lower *dan tien* and the lower body and is an essential component of Daoist breathing. It allows the practitioner to relax and build their *yin* energy, stabilising them, and helps remove excess energy from the eyes, the front of the brain and upper glands, helping release hyperactivity and compulsive behaviour.

- Sit or lie comfortably with your spine relaxed and open and breathe through the nose if possible with a soft and quiet breath, as if you are breathing a light oil in a very fine stream through the nostrils.
- Relax the feet and hands and allow them to sink and be fully supported by what they are

resting on. Allow the forehead and face to relax down, relaxing the jaw so the hinges of the jaw open slightly. Let the lips relax, the tip of the tongue touch the roof of the mouth as if saying the French word *le*, the bottom of the tongue relax down and the two big veins in the neck relax, soften and sink.

- Relax the throat down into the chest, let your chest relax and become still, allow your belly to relax and move with your breath.
- Let your sensations drop into your belly, feel deep in your belly in your lower *dan tien*, and gradually let your whole body relax and your mind slow.

2 Release your diaphragm and let your breathing become fluid and continuous

The free movement of the diaphragm during the breathing process is one of most useful and effective foundational health practices you can accomplish. The reason is simple: every time we become stressed in life, we constrict our diaphragm and hold our breath to varying degrees, which in turn freezes our *qi* and emotions; freeing the diaphragm reverses this process, opening the *qi* and emotions. In a stressful situation freeing your diaphragm can half your stress in seconds. Freeing your diaphragm throughout life frees the *qi* of the entire Middle Burner and the emotions immeasurably, and is a key technique in Daoist longevity practices. If we then allow our breathing to become very fluid and

continuous, our *qi* will become not only free and open but also very smooth, which relaxes the whole nervous system and further releases anxiety. So as well as sinking your *qi*, now try the following:

- Loosen the diaphragm by patting along its whole length whilst letting go inside your body, so that the vibrations of the patting cause the nerves holding the diaphragm tight to release.
- Let your *qi* sink as above and feel the diaphragm fall downwards as you breathe in, like a balloon filling with water, and spring up as you breathe out, relaxing inside as you do so until this becomes a fluid continuous motion, one continuous momentum and energy moving almost by itself, like the motion of the sea.
- Completely relax the throat. Do not control or regulate the breath using the throat in any way whatsoever.

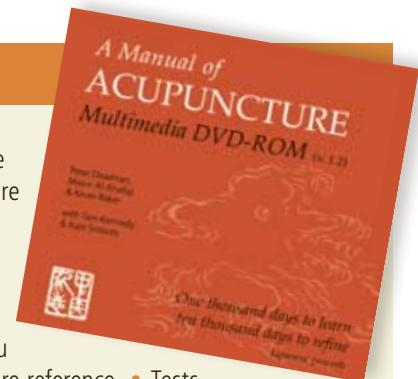
- Allow everything you feel inside you, in the entirety of your being, to relax and smooth out as your breathing relaxes and becomes fluid, and gradually allow the movement of the diaphragm and belly to become one, breathing in with the diaphragm sinking and belly relaxing open, and vice versa, fluid, relaxed and continuous.

As ever, make sure you never strain as you practise, or you will not relax (and you may damage yourself!).

Gio Maschio has taught Daoist internal arts for over a decade, and practised them for more than 18 years. He designed and teaches the College's *qi gong* for acupuncturists course, has conducted seminars for the BAcC, and is one of Master BK Frantzis' most experienced instructors in Europe. He also studies buddhism and *dzogchen* meditation. He practises and teaches internal arts full time, including classes, workshops and retreats – visit oxinar.com for more information.

A Manual of Acupuncture Multimedia DVD-ROM

This DVD boasts interactive features from multiple choice and customisable self-tests to videos showing how to confidently locate and needle even the most daunting points. • Point location tests are easily the best feature. Given a point you must choose the correct body area then 'drag and drop' a blue dot on the correct location, then click 'Confirm' with trepidation to see if you're right. You can retest yourself on a whole body section, any wrong answers or access score tables which show where you need more practice. You can also flag difficult points and write notes that auto-save for future reference. • Tests for point classifications, Chinese names, channels and collaterals can also be picked from the main menu or self-customised to suit your needs. • The original reference section has also been updated. Hovering over an icon of a body part brings up a diagram of relevant points in the area. Chinese characters can be clicked to hear the correct pronunciation of a name and well produced videos round off the multimedia toolbox with clear instructions on location, needling and red flags, as well as links to related videos of key points and anatomical landmarks. • 'One thousand days to learn, ten thousand days to refine' says the cover, but even if you have only have ten minutes a day to spare, you will find something to inspire and motivate you here. **James Thirlwall practises in Oxford, Haddenham and Eynsham**



Acupuncture in pregnancy and childbirth



How did you come to write *The Essential Guide to Acupuncture in Pregnancy and Childbirth*?

When the idea of writing a book was first suggested to me – it all seemed too difficult. But the idea refused to go away and as a start I wrote an article for the *Journal of Chinese Medicine*. This resulted in an enquiry from Peter Deadman for further articles and an offer to work together with the ultimate aim of publishing a book. Six years later with Peter's support with the editorial and production it became a reality. It certainly took longer than I expected, several rewrites and gathering helpful editing comments from colleagues and midwives but the end result was a book that was more readable than one that I would have written on my own.

Where does your interest in treating pregnant women come from?

As a nurse I was working in Neonatal Intensive Care which involved rushing down to the delivery suite and using dramatic techniques when labour did not go well.

It seemed a natural transition to use what I had learnt as an acupuncturist to help women achieve a healthy pregnancy and the most efficient birth possible. I became pregnant in my final year of acupuncture study which certainly turned this concept into a reality!

I became involved in child-centred activities with other pregnant women and was constantly being asked if there was anything I could do to help with their problems, especially by women who had no available

treatment from Western medicine.

I was also promoting the use of acupressure for pain relief in labour, which had the effect of bringing more and more pregnant women into my practice. Working with these women led to an interest from midwives in the effects they were seeing and an interest in learning some techniques that they could use.

Initially this was acupuncture to induce women and provide pain relief in labour but very quickly it became apparent that the technique they found the most useful was that of **prebirth** acupuncture – a term that can be used to describe weekly treatments from 36 or 37 weeks to prepare women for childbirth. Ideally this takes into account underlying Chinese medicine patterns as well as the physiological process of labour, for example through using points to ripen the cervix. The effectiveness of these treatments being used by the midwives and the students at the acupuncture college where I taught, became the motivation to begin writing.

It just seemed bizarre that acupuncturists were reluctant to treat women during pregnancy when I was seeing midwives, (after only a short training) achieve results that were reducing medical intervention and making a real difference to women's lives.



Why should we teach midwives acupuncture?

How receptive are they to learning the benefits?

There is sometimes the concern that by teaching midwives selected acupuncture techniques I have taken away business from traditionally trained acupuncturists. I started training midwives because it was obvious that they would be able to treat a larger group of women than I could in private practice – both in terms of numbers and in terms of reaching women who could not afford treatment.

The reality has been that this is indeed the case, with the added benefit that midwives became influential advocates for promoting the value of acupuncture treatment. When a midwife successfully treats a woman for insomnia, heartburn, haemorrhoids, or back pain, her family and friends seek out acupuncture treatment for themselves.

They also normalise acupuncture use to medical staff. I have recently been asked to run a maternity acupuncture clinic for women through a local hospital. This is something I am confident arose from the results seen by medical staff through the midwives using and promoting acupuncture.

To me it is a matter of having defined scopes of practice – midwives who use acupuncture are not acupuncturists.

It is up to us as a profession to work with midwives to reinforce this concept. I would be horrified if a weekend course where midwives learnt a few point formulae for induction and prebirth came to mean that they specialised in obstetric acupuncture, just as I would be horrified by acupuncturists giving inappropriate medical advice to women or not recognising when to refer a pregnant women for necessary medical treatment.

As to the midwives being receptive to learning and practising acupuncture – yes, very. They come into the course with excellent

palpation and interactive people skills. They are used to putting their hands on bodies and quickly take to locating and needling acupuncture points. They are used to dealing with women who have a variety of emotional and physical problems, for instance it is obvious to them that women who have fear issues or who are exhausted are not going to labour well.

'The use of acupuncture in pregnancy and childbirth is not a competition with Western medicine to see who uses the "best" medicine – it is about offering women the chance to have the healthiest pregnancy and most efficient birth possible.'

The presentation of a woman who we would diagnose as having Liver *qi* stagnation or Spleen *yang* depletion takes very little explanation. Midwives recognise these patterns as they see these women in their practice constantly and appreciate that working with women in pregnancy leads to better birthing and postnatal outcomes.

Midwives use acupuncture because of the results it delivers, not because they have a specific interest in promoting complementary medicine. They are the ideal group to work with to promote the professional integration of our medicine.

Debra Betts teaches and practises in New Zealand, with a practice specialising in pregnancy. For further information on her UK lectures in October this year, a free downloadable booklet and video on using acupressure in labour visit acupuncture.rhizome.net.nz

Crossword Solution Across 1 alternative 7 ox 8 ip
10 lap 12 overflow 15 de 16 nasal 17 heart 19 ME
21 transfer 24 ear 26 at 27 JS 28 tender point
Down 1 apposition 2 tone 3 ex 4 nails 5 ill
6 expectorant 9 po 11 ad 13 react 14 weeps 18 water

CROSSWORD

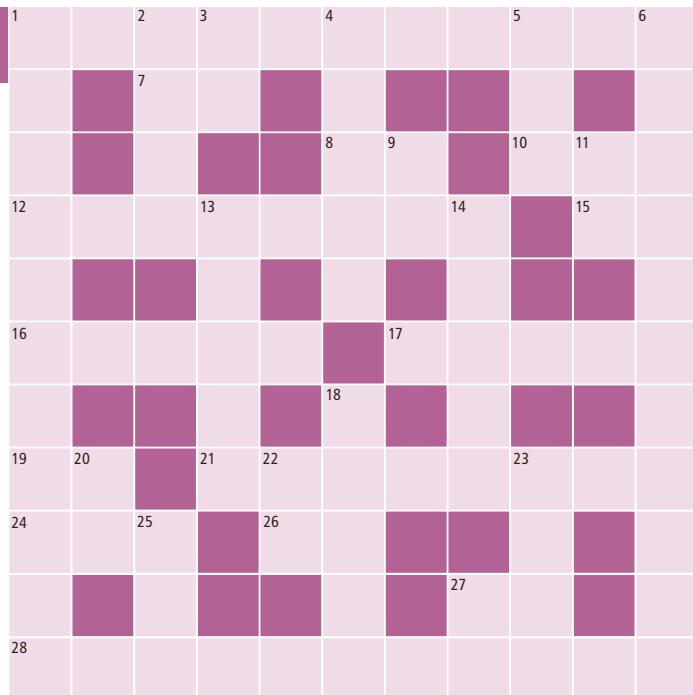
Across

- 1** It's now called complementary
7 Animal of the Earth Element
8 Inpatient (abbrev)
10 Place your patients' hands here when marking back *shu* points
12 A pulse that is wide and big will do this
14 __ *qi* – obtaining *qi* when needling
16 The Lung opens into the _____ orifice
17 An Organ of the Fire Element
19 Myalgic encephalomyelitis (abbrev)
21 Some practitioners use this to move *qi*
24 Orifice of the Kidney
26 __ las – vertebra of the neck
27 Alternative abbreviation for the Triple Burner
28 An *ahshi* point is one (two words)

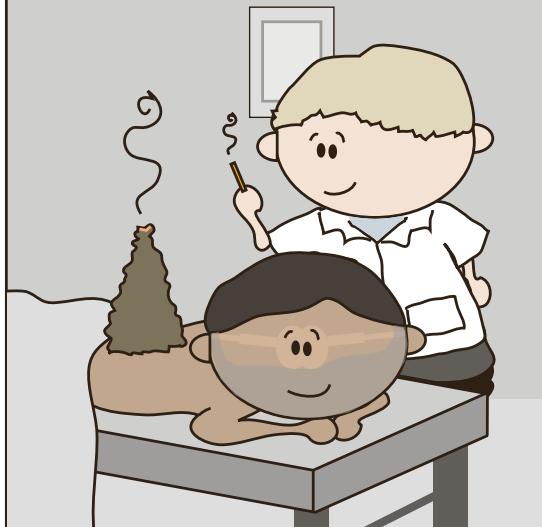
Down

- 1** Patients make one when they want to see you
2 The sound in the voice
3 Breathing out is an __ hale
4 Residue of the Liver
5 Unwell
6 A herb or medicine to make you cough
9 The Lung spirit
11 Prefix denoting towards the body
13 Treatment _____ ion may come from the inside out
14 What a Metal type does
18 An Element
20 Electro-acupuncture (abbrev)
22 Rheumatoid arthritis (abbrev)
23 *Pin yin* for Du 24
25 Directing vessel
27 __ S = emergency

Crossword solution See opposite, page 36



"So what was your trip to Everest like?"



CPD events for practitioners

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Ken Lloyd 17 Sep 2009

Dermatology in Chinese medicine

Angie & John

Hicks 8 Oct 2009

Getting better at getting the CF

Jill Glover 22 Oct 2009

Understanding IVF

Martin Powell 29 Oct 2009

Neuromuscular taping for acupuncturists: basic course

Radha Thambirajah

3–4 Nov 2009

or 26–27 Jan 2010

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Jennie Longbottom

11–12 Nov 2009

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Booking now at **cicm.org.uk** or call Silvia Hovancova on **0118 950 8880**

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Charlie Buck 26 Nov 2009

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Charlie Buck 27 Nov 2009

Needling skills

Bill Ryan 7–8 Dec 2009

The art of feeling qi

Bill Ryan 10 Dec 2009

The art of projecting qi

Kevin Young 13–14 Jan 2010

Sports medicine

Marek Urbanowicz

19–20 Jan 2010

Kinesiology and food intolerance testing

Rachel Peckham and Jacqueline Mangold

8–9 Feb 2010

Substance misuse

Day Post

19 Feb 2010

Treating stroke using acupuncture

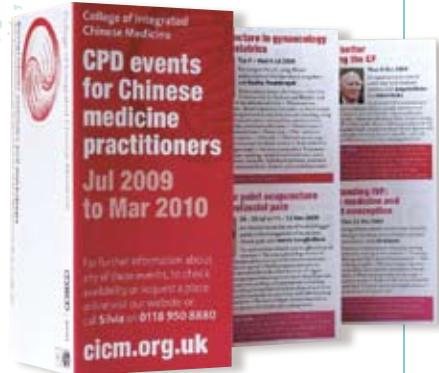
Peter Deadman 4 Mar 2010

Chinese health preservation

Neil Quinton 25 Mar 2010

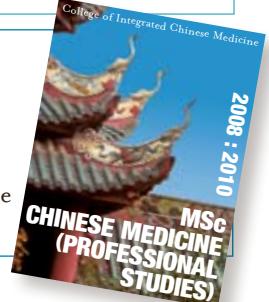
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Our current events mailer pictured below – next issue due in November



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