Traditional Chinese Medicine

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What is Traditional Chinese Medicine?

- Traditional Chinese Medicine is more properly called Traditional East Asian Medicine.
- T.E.A.M. was the primary medical model of all of East Asia for the past four thousand years.
- It is the longest continuously practiced form of primary care medicine in the world.
- Today it is gaining popularity worldwide.
Traditional East Asian Medicine

- Was practiced in the countries defined by the “Sinitic Sphere” – the countries that adopted some form of Confucianism
  - China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam

- Has four major parts, called the “Four Pillars”
  - Acupuncture and Moxibustion
  - Herbs and Diet
  - Physical Manipulation
  - Breathing Exercises
Acupuncture and Moxibustion

- Acupuncture
  - The use of nine traditional tools on the surface of the body to change the state of health

- Moxibustion
  - The burning of “Moxa” (artemesia vulgaris / mugwort) on the skin to change the state of health

- Both of these methods work on a bio-feedback system that links the surface to the interior of the body
Acupuncture

- Acupuncture involves the use of tools on the skin
- Some of the tools are needles that penetrate the skin
- Other tools pull the skin, or depress the skin
Acupuncture has become the subject of many research studies in the modern day.

The World Health Organization has endorsed acupuncture for the treatment of seventeen major health concerns, from back pain to cancer to HIV/AIDS.

One study in the Journal of the American Medical Association’s Archives of Internal Medicine in 2007 denoted that after 10 acupuncture visits patients with back pain of an average of 8 years’ duration reported 47.6% improvement, compared with a 27.4% improvement from the control group who received Western medicine for back pain.
Moxibustion

- Moxibustion is actually older than acupuncture, and has been used historically for many health concerns.
- In Japan, moxibustion therapy is so developed that it actually has a separate license structure from acupuncture.
Moxibustion has also been the subject of modern research.

In a 1998 study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 75% of the pregnant women in the study had breech fetuses that turned in the normal position with moxibustion therapy.

In a 2007 study reported in the journal Acupuncture in Medicine demonstrated relief of osteoarthritis pain in rats following moxibustion therapy.
Herbs and Diet

- **Herbs**
  - Herbal medicines actually include plants, minerals, and animal products
  - Herbs are used to alter the body’s metabolism, alleviate pain, and cure disease

- **Diet**
  - T.E.A.M. Diet Therapy is based on creating functional change in the state of health not on the biochemistry of foods
Herbs

- Herbs are similar to pharmaceuticals in that they are used for the short term to alter the state of health
  - Approximately 60% of Western medicines are derived from plant sources

- There have been many studies of the efficacy of herbs for severe health concerns.
  - In September 2008, the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) has awarded $6 million to create the Center for Herbal Research on Colorectal Cancer. Researchers at the center will study the anti-tumor effects of different preparations of the herbs American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*), and notoginseng (*Panax notoginseng*).
Asian medicine has used diet therapy since its inception.

Foods are ideal medicinals since the body does not develop a tolerance for them.

The T.E.A.M. approach to diet therapy is based on common sense long term changes to the individual’s intake, not short term fad approaches.
Physical Manipulation

- Physical Manipulation includes techniques to address the body’s hard tissues; the bones, ligaments, muscles, and tendons

- Stretches, range of motion exercises, and prescriptive exercises are all used to correct the imbalances in the body structure
Physical Manipulation

- Physical Manipulation in the classical period included the setting of bones, and general traumatology.
- Often times internal medical problems can be impacted by the use of physical manipulation.
- A 1997 study reported in the *Journal of Complementary and Alternative Medicine* denoted improvement in symptomology and reduction of pain in patients with multiple sclerosis who were treated with massage.
Breathing Practices

- Traditional breathing practices include those that resemble meditation, taichi, and what we now call qigong.
- Breathing practices are used in Traditional East Asian Medicine to treat problems such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, etc.
Breathing Practices

- The Asian medical tradition holds that if you exercise, then breathing changes, so if we change breathing patterns, we can affect the body in ways similar to exercise.

- Alteration of the breath can actually alter the relative acidity and alkalinity of the blood changing the body’s pH and influencing the overall state of the metabolism.

- A study in the January 2009 issue of the *British Medical Journal* reported that a double-blind randomized controlled trial revealed specific breathing techniques can cut the use of reliever and preventer inhalers required in mild asthma.
Most states require licensure for the practice of acupuncture.

Two states require licensure for the practice of Asian Herbal Medicine.

Acupuncture education in America requires a minimum of 2850 hours of education to sit for the three part licensure examination.

In certain states medical doctors can practice acupuncture with either no training at all, or a 300 hour course.
Traditional East Asian Medicine in Modern America

- Insurance companies have begun to cover acupuncture though the health concerns that are covered may be limited.

- Rhode Island, Florida, New Mexico, Washington State, and California have mandated that acupuncture be covered by insurance, and in those states acupuncturists can operate as primary care providers.
The American Healthcare Crisis

- The number of primary care doctors in America compared to the population is much smaller than in most other industrialized countries.

- As the need for primary care providers increases, it is likely that Traditional East Asian Medicine will become much more mainstream and may take over some of the role of primary care.

- Effectively the oldest form of medicine on the planet may once again become one of the main avenues of primary care.
For More Information

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