


The Truth Is, There Is Only One Medicine

By Bonnie Walker

The following is a reply to the Point-Counterpoint article by Drs. Amaro & Molony in the March issue of *Acupuncture Today*.

The question posed at the outset of this discussion was, "Do medical and chiropractic physicians have the right to practice acupuncture?" As the right to practice is granted at the discretion of the state legislatures and regulated by the state licensing boards, the question is moot; the decision has already been made for most of us.

 The real question is, how can we foster a sense of professionalism in this profession so that we avoid destroying ourselves from within?

Isn't this really just a debate about being rather than seeming? Each of the scientific disciplines has gone through this phase in the course of their evolution. In science, Galileo, Bernard, and the particle physicists were all persecuted. In the early days of the chiropractic profession, training began with a six-week course, in which burley men would be taught a few moves and were then sent out to crack backs. There was resistance in some of the first chiropractic schools to the study of anatomy and Western sciences, as well as nutrition, massage, etc. Allopathic medicine was no better, with its ridicule of sterile techniques, preventive medicine, nutrition, and mind-body medicine. The acupuncturists quibble over which derivative copyrighted microsystem is the one true religion, and we all agonize over who to let in or keep out of our little club.

To quote Schoepenhauer, "All truth goes through three stages. First, it's ridiculed; next, it's violently opposed; third, it's generally recognized as being true." As our disciplines mature, one would hope that our childish myopia will become a more mature presbyopia. Better still, one would hope that we all learn how to accommodate our focus.

Regardless of whether we have approached acupuncture from the chiropractic path; via an MD; RN; PhD; Dipl. Ac.; or at our grandfather's knee, the important thing is that we are in it. We all started somewhere. Some have gone through long agonizing searches for accurate information; others have settled for what is popularly available. Regardless of our point of entry, it is only our continued, tireless, stringent study that earns us our right, day by day, to continued membership in this healing brotherhood. The old guard who brought the first poorly translated words to the west must make room for the talented and dedicated renegades who elaborate and clarify the ancient meanings in light of modern science. Newcomers with limited exposure must push themselves to greater depths of understanding, in humble appreciation of those who have gone before.

Ancient Native American medicine bundles have been shown to contain packets of needles. Indigenous tribes in South America puncture the skin for healing purposes. Acupuncture has been practiced in this country since early in the 19th century (and perhaps earlier). Chiropractors no more can claim acupuncture for their own than Columbus could rightfully claim the New World. Yes, they may have assimilated it while the medical profession was deciding whether they were going to "discover" it. God bless James Reston for bringing acupuncture to the attention of the U.S. medical scene, which in its inimitable fashion first attempted to

suppress it, then quantify and measure it to death, then grab it for themselves, all while allying with the insurance companies to be sure they would be the only ones who could get paid for it. Didn't they learn their lesson about restraint of trade with the *Wilk, et al. vs AMA* case? Those who so proudly tout Mao's reconstituted TCM might consider how much damage was done to the integrity of this art by the cultural revolution. We are like the blind men and the elephant, each loudly defending our own limited view while missing the majesty of the whole.

It's true that some practitioners are motivated to restrict others from our "turf" for reasons of power, control, or money. You know who you are, but I prefer to think of our colleagues in the healing arts as having a higher purpose: better serving the needs of suffering beings. It is the personal responsibility of those who care for the ill to fill in the holes in their own understanding. Our patients deserve no less. So the physiologist learns energetic medicine; Daoist scholars study particle physics; and physicians explore *taiji* and *qigong*. The yin and yang of eastern and western medicine must converge. How one can effectively treat, say, the flu, without knowledge (or at least awareness) of *wei qi*, immunoglobulins; pulmonary and gastrointestinal physiology; the *liu qi* and the energetic layers; clinical nutrition; and pharmacology, I cannot imagine.

I am a DC and a Dipl. Ac. (not yet an LAc), practicing legally under my chiropractic license, so I can appreciate both sides of this conundrum. My acupuncture education was a grueling, intensive four-year classical apprenticeship with a master, which qualified me to sit for (and pass) NCCAOM Board certification, but was not accepted for an LAc due to state statues. My first acupuncture certification was by way of a 100-hour course that taught me just enough to be dangerous. It was taught by a DC who minimized and ridiculed the notions of yin and yang and made us memorize formulae for conditions. I have been in private practice for 12 years, with eight of those years being primarily acupuncture. I am honored to serve on the faculty of Jung Tao School of Classical Chinese Medicine, and teach in both energetic and biomedical didactic and clinical courses. I am embarrassed by our colleagues boasting of the numbers of patients they see daily (as if quantity outweighs quality); mistaking the *jingluo* for the blood vascular system, misrendering the *taijitu* because they don't understand that yang descends and yin ascends; and proposing a doctoral program that mentions such specialties as dermatology **or** pulmonology **or** immunology. I am just as appalled at 100-300 hour MD/DC wonders that practice "cookbook" acupuncture or "chiro-lite" as I am by iatrogenic pharmaceutical or phytochemical toxicosis; acupuncturists puncturing forbidden points because they're unaware of the classical proscriptions; denying patients moxibustion because "it smells too much like pot"; modifying classical concepts so they can be copyrighted and marketed; perpetuating misunderstanding and inaccuracy just because the rest of the herd believes that way; and the failure to refer appropriately to an MD, DC, LAc, etc. You, too, know who you are.

I am honored to serve in this profession beside the dedicated few who refuse to sacrifice truth for expedience no matter what the cost. They are truly the unsung masters, the humble physicians or academicians toiling often in solitude, the object of derision within and without their profession, while the well-lit peanut sellers on busy streets sell their potions, gadgets and cookbooks to trusting consumers who are ill-educated to make an informed choice.

A profession requires the participation of professionals. To my fellow acupuncture professionals I would say this: be responsible for your own inadequacies and strive to remediate them.

For the weekend wonders, you have made a good start -- now go study the energetics and discard your reliance on the training wheels of point formulae. Put in the 2,000 or so hours it takes to really begin to learn this art before you put "acupuncture" on your office sign.

For the acupuncturists, look outside of the comfortable jargon of your pet microsystem and return to the classics, having the courage to illuminate your misunderstanding in the light of the

ancient sun. Learn the chemistry and physiology of the beings in your care, and learn how to refer to (and communicate with) the medical profession.

For the acupuncture colleges and medical and chiropractic schools, open your doors to those who you feel need more training. You have no right to complain about poorly trained practitioners if you refuse to train them.

And for the scientists, give up the research studies to prove that acupuncture works, because we know it does, and observe all the evidences and mechanisms that show how it works. You can begin to dispel your skepticism of its "superstitions" by examining the known physical forces of the universe (gravity; electromagnetism; transformation; weak and strong nuclear force) in light of the five phasic concordances known as the *wuxing* (wood, fire, earth, metal and water).

All of the parties involved should lose the professional jealousy and foster some professional integrity. The truth is, there is really only one medicine. We study and treat the same beings (whether two- or four-legged). The physiology is the same. The energetics are the same. If it looks different to us, it's probably due to our own distorted perspective or lack of sophistication. Those who will be most successful are those who can see the entire picture.

Esse quam videri. (To be, rather than to seem.)