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The New York Times

July 18, 1980, Friday, Late City Final Edition

**AMERICAN IN PEKING DOUBTS ACUPUNCTURE AS TREATMENT**

**BYLINE:** By FOX BUTTERFIELD

**SECTION:** Section A; Page 2, Column 3; Foreign Desk

**LENGTH:** 1068 words

**DATELINE:** PEKING, July 17

**Acupuncture** for anesthesia works remarkably well, but it is far less effective than the claims made for it in treating chronic or acute illness, in the view of David Eisenberg, the first American allowed to study for an extended period at the Institute of **Traditional Chinese Medicine** here.

Mr. Eisenberg, a 25-year-old fourth-year student at the Harvard Medical School and a native of Woodmere, L.I., has just completed a year in China as an exchange scholar. He received his diploma from the institute last week after dealing with several hundred patients, an unusual privilege for a foreigner.

Mr. Eisenberg said in an interview that he had come in the hope of learning ''what could be of value in **traditional Chinese medicine** to health-care professionals in the West.'' He will return to Harvard still uncertain what can be transferred.

Sitting in his small room on a tile-roofed courtyard, he asked, as he often has over the past 12 months, '' How much of traditional Chinese medicine really works?'' His answer: ''A lot of it really works and a lot is really nonsense.''

Trust in the Doctor

A key element is the doctor-patient relationship, said Mr. Eisenberg, who studied Chinese at Harvard and in Taiwan. He explained: ''In traditional Chinese medicine so much depends on the trust the patient puts in the doctor, so there is an element of faith healing. I have seen 80-year-old Chinese doctors who elicit such trust in their patients that whether they are pressing the right acupuncture points or prescribing the right herbal drugs, the patient's illness is going to improve radically. Whether or not Western medicine can explain why the remedy works, it does.''

He has found the doctors here to be less condescending than those at home, he said, adding that ''in America doctors think of themselves as an elite;'' here they draw an average salary of $43 a month, much the same as skilled factory workers or middle-aged office workers.

People go into medicine for the personal satisfaction or because of family connections, Mr. Eisenberg has found. Students who get the highest scores on the college entrance examinations chose more glamorous fields such as nuclear physics and engineering. So there has to be a sense of commitment, Mr. Eisenberg said, as in the case of his professor of herbal medicine, who maintains that members of his family have been doctors for 19 generations.

While working in the acupuncture clinic for a month, Mr. Eisenberg was surprised when roughly half the 100 patients he talked with said they were suffering from ''weakness of the nerves'' - what in the United States might be called nervous tension.

Deep-Seated Complaints Elicited

These patients and people Mr. Eisenberg met on trains, in taxicabs and in restaurants usually complained of the same symptoms: anxiety, insomnia, loss of energy, headaches and irritability. When Mr. Eisenberg began to probe into their troubles, he elicited deepseated problems: political persecution, depression among students unable to fulfill parental expectations, dissatisfaction among husbands and wives separated by job assignment, loneliness among elderly women.

''The patients themselves believed their problems had a purely physical origin, as did the Chinese doctors who examined them and prescribed a physical cure,'' the American said. ''This makes having 'weakness of the nerves' socially acceptable.''

Chinese medicine does not recognize Freud's theory of the unconscious, he went on, so doctors do not look into patients' psyches or their social background. Moreover, a Freudian interpretation could make it appear that the political or social system was to blame.

Discussing the effectiveness of acupuncture, Mr. Eisenberg conceded that he had come with a bias in favor of it. ''I had hoped to see people with problems who responded dramatically to the needles in ways which Western medicine couldn't help them,'' he said, citing sprained ankles, wrenched backs and migraine headaches, which enthusiasts maintain needles can alleviate.

Few Responses Were Dramatic

''But out of 100 patients who came in, only a handful showed dramatic responses,'' he related. ''Surely the stroke patients slowly recuperated, the chronic lower-back aches felt a bit better. But all of these took a considerable period of time and none convinced me of acupuncture's superiority over Western medicine. That's not what New Yorkers with headaches and backaches want to hear.''

Mr. Eisenberg was interested to find patients who came often for acupuncture and were uncomfortable without it; he was tempted to conclude that they might be addicted to the needles. This could be important in understanding how acupuncture works, he noted, for ''there is a lot of suggestive material in Western medical journals that one of the mechanisms by which acupuncture works is that it stimulates natural morphinelike substances, narcoticlike receptors.''

Like almost all the American doctors who have been to China, Mr. Eisenberg said he had been thoroughly impressed by acupuncture used for anesthesia.

Problems of Complex System

Concerning the two other branches of traditional medicine, herbal medicine and therapeutic massage, Mr. Eisenberg said that, again, he was not clear in his own mind. With 10,000 herbs, and 10 or 15 of them in each prescription, it is difficult to establish the scientific basis of Chinese pharmacology, at least by Western standards, he said. Also, he said, it is hard for Westerners to penetrate to a theoretical basis for Chinese pharmacology.

''Take a man who comes in with a high fever, cough and some pain in his lungs,'' Mr. Eisenberg said. ''An examination and X-ray using Western medicine would show he had pneumonia, but a Chinese doctor takes a brief medical history, looks at his tongue, the skin, and feels the pulse. From this he makes a diagnosis of 'weak blood, internal fire,' and prescribes a brew of herbs.''

But not every patient who has pneumonia by Western standards is suffering from ''weak blood, internal fire,'' according to Chinese practice, Mr. Eisenberg said, and the next patient might be diagnosed as having a different imbalance and given a different prescription. It is such differences that have made trying to integrate Chinese and Western medicine difficult, and China has not really succeeded, despite official claims, Mr.Eisenberg asserted.

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Illustrations: photo of David Eisenberg

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The New York Times

August 17, 2000, Thursday, Late Edition - Final

**Chinese Immigrants Say Clinics Fill a Need for Inexpensive Care**

**BYLINE:** By EDWARD WONG

**SECTION:** Section B; Page 3; Column 1; Metropolitan Desk

**LENGTH:** 630 words

The way Wayne Chang saw it, it was one thing to go to a **Chinese medicine** clinic for **acupuncture** or herbal treatments, quite another for a medical procedure.

"I would go to a straight-up American doctor for Western medicine," Mr. Chang, a Flushing resident, said as he stared down the block at the New York Beijing Hospital of **Traditional Chinese Medicine,** a clinic that investigators shut down on Tuesday after charging its staff with practicing unlicensed medicine. "But a lot of people around here don't care. It's cheap."

Clinics that specialize in traditional medicine fill a niche in communities of Chinese immigrants. Illegal immigrants, people who cannot speak English and those who cannot afford insurance or uninsured hospital care often turn to them for medical attention. Few people care if the clinics are licensed. Dozens thrive in the neighborhood.

There is a strip of the clinics on the second floors of buildings along 41st Avenue near Main Street, said Cheng Wang, a Flushing truck driver who seeks massage therapy for back pains. And on that block, at least three shops sell pungent herbal medicine from sidewalk stands. Sometimes the clinics are run from the back rooms of apartments.

"The one thing that concerned me when this was brought to me," said Richard A. Brown, the Queens district attorney, "was if I moved forward on this, will I be keeping people from medical attention that they otherwise might not be able to get?"

The investigation began in May after Mr. Brown's office learned of a lawsuit filed by a patient, Chunxi Qiao, who contended that the clinic had botched the removal of an intrauterine device. The authorities have charged six unlicensed practitioners at the clinic, including its owner, Shou Dong Wang.

Hugh H. Mo, a lawyer for the defendants named in the civil lawsuit, said his clients were disputing that they gave improper treatment.

Many Flushing residents do not see a problem with most of the traditional medicine clinics. Mr. Wang, the truck driver, said he had gone to three different clinics for back pain until he found one on Roosevelt Avenue that could relieve his suffering with a $35 massage.

But the problems come when the clinics practice Western medicine, which they sometimes do for relatively low prices, several Flushing residents said. "They're not doctors," said Sprinz Chou, the manager of a hair salon next to the shuttered clinic. "I think people are crazy to go there."

Ms. Chou, who moved to the United States 30 years ago, said that she had a customer who complained two months ago about treatment she had received at the clinic.

"I said, 'If it's not so good, why did you go?' " she said. "She said she wanted to check it out after a friend recommended it."

Ms. Qiao, the woman who sued the clinic, said in an affidavit that she first went there last November for neck pains. But, according to her affidavit, clinicians botched the aftermath of a subsequent IUD removal.

That took place on Nov. 13, lasting 10 to 15 minutes. Afterward, Ms. Qiao said, the clinic gave her herbal medicine for her recovery.

That afternoon, Ms. Qiao said, she took the medicine. For two days, she experienced stomach pains and other symptoms.

On Nov. 15, a frightened Ms. Qiao went to the clinic, where she discovered that a doctor had mistakenly switched her medicine with that of another patient, she said. She was given another medicine, but her symptoms continued, she said. The next morning, she went to Flushing Hospital, where doctors put her on intravenous medication. She filed a lawsuit with the State Supreme Court for medical negligence in January.

"No one should have to go through such pain like I went through," she said in her affidavit. "No one should have to feel as I do now."

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The New York Times

October 1, 1990, Monday, Late Edition - Final

**Chinese Medicine Proves Itself Where Western Medicine Fails**

**SECTION:** Section A; Page 20, Column 4; Editorial Desk

**LENGTH:** 414 words

To the Editor:

Your Sept. 4 report from Beijing on the traditional Chinese healing art of qi gong is an example of why Americans remain ignorant about **traditional Chinese medicine** technology. There should be no implication that a qi gong doctor bases disease diagnoses on the presence of ear wax, nor comparison of the recent growth in interest in qi gong to a 19th century stir caused when a Chinese man claimed to be the brother of Jesus.

I am a medical doctor from China, an internist and an epidemiologist. While I am proud of what Western medicine can do for many patients, I am acutely aware of its limitations. When I and other medical doctors in China find patient conditions that are not easily treated with Western techniques, we often send the patients to the **Chinese medicine** department of the hospital, where **acupuncture,** qi gong and Chinese herbal therapies often achieve greater success. Hundreds of scientific studies illustrate the medical benefits of qi gong.

In one study of more than 100 advanced cancer patients by the China Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Beijing, the control group was treated only with Western drugs. The experimental group was treated with the same Western drugs, plus qi gong. The experimental group gained strength and weight and showed improved macrophage activity, all statistically significant results, while the control group showed overall decreases on these same measures.

In another study, performed at the Beijing College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, the electroencephalogram power spectrum of a subject was measured while a qi gong doctor emitted qi (what you call ''a vague concept that can refer to air or gas or a vague spirit or life force'') from his hands while standing across the room. During and for a short time after the emission, the EEG power spectrum synchronized and intensified in the alpha range.

To eliminate placebo effects, a similar shift in EEG was observed when the test subject was replaced with sleeping cats and rabbits. Electronic equipment has even been developed that simulates the emitted energy of a qi gong doctor and creates similar shifts in the EEG power spectrum.

I agree that there are those who offer unrealistic claims under the banner of qi gong for the sake of profit. But a deeper look is required before branding all of qi gong as a passing religious fad.

YUAN ZHI FU

San Clemente, Calif., Sept. 17, 1990

The writer is licensed as an acupuncturist.

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**TYPE:** Letter

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The New York Times

October 13, 1985, Sunday, Late City Final Edition

**BEYOND ACUPUNCTURE**

**BYLINE:** By Barbara Gasterl; Barbara Gastel, the assistant dean of the School of Medicine of the University of California, San Francisco, taught in China from 1983 until earlier this year.

**SECTION:** Section 7; Page 16, Column 2; Book Review Desk

**LENGTH:** 623 words

ENCOUNTERS WITH QI Exploring **Chinese Medicine.** By David Eisenberg with Thomas Lee Wright. Illustrated. 254 pp. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. $16.95.

ONCE when he was living in China, David Eisenberg relates, ''a group of schoolchildren gently took hold of my arms and walked me across the street. Having noticed my blue-gray eyes, they assumed I was totally blind and wanted to escort me through the traffic.'' But to judge by ''Encounters With Qi,'' a vivid glimpse of **traditional Chinese medicine,** Dr. Eisenberg is far from blind.

A doctor of internal medecine and a clinical research fellow at Harvard Medical School, he began studying Chinese as a college freshman. He was the first American medical exchange student in the People's Republic of China, spending 1979-80 studying traditional Chinese medicine. Besides being tutored in the subject, he worked alongside his instructors in clinics specializing in acupuncture, massage and herbal therapy (the main traditional mode of treatment). His experience provided him with anecdotal evidence suggesting that such methods are sometimes of considerable value in controlling discomfort and may also aid in managing disease.

In ''Encounters With Qi,'' Dr. Eisenberg shares observations made during this stay and on shorter visits to China. Work introducing Westerners to traditional Chinese medicine has tended to be forbiddingly dry and abstract, but this account is highly readable, in part because case histories, human interest, dialogue and local color abound. While it generally avoids the topic of Western-style medicine - much practiced in China, particularly in the urban centers - it ranges widely.

For example, Dr. Eisenberg cites the key role of tongue inspection (a major diagnostic technique in traditional Chinese medicine) and suggests that Western clinicians may have something to learn in this regard. He notes that in many instances Chinese physicians, who were considered responsible for teaching how to live healthily, used to be paid only so long as their patients remained well. He describes the status of doctors in contemporary China. He even presents analogies and links between Chinese medicine and Chinese cooking.

The ''qi'' (pronounced chee) of the title is a central concept, meaning something like ''vital energy.'' Dr. Eisenberg reports being taught that acupuncture and acupressure massage are intended to correct imbalances and stagnations of qi in the body and that herbal remedies are designed to rectify excesses and deficiencies of qi. He notes the controversial claim made by some Chinese that qi is not merely an intellectual construct but rather something physical that can be directed outward, for example, to move objects. And he describes, with the balance of open-mindedness and skepticism that characterizes this book, demonstrations seeming to support the contention.

Whether qi is indeed somehow a physical reality and to what extent and in what circumstances various Chinese therapies are effective remain unanswered questions. But Dr. Eisenberg calls for careful Western-style research, so Chinese and Western medicine can be integrated and the most effective elements from either source applied in each case.

As he admits, such research is not easy. In China and elsewhere, specialists in traditional Chinese medicine and those in Western medicine rarely share ideas or patients. And the conceptual frameworks of the systems, including diagnostic categories, are so widely disparate that studies may be nearly impossible to design. But if Dr. Eisenberg's observations foreshadow what is to come, the exploration of Chinese medicine will produce findings that are intriguing and that the West may find medically useful.

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Photo of cancer patients performing Qi Gong in China

**TYPE:** REVIEW

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The New York Times

May 8, 2010 Saturday

Late Edition - Final

**A Chinese Art, In the Context Of the West**

**BYLINE:** By LESLEY ALDERMAN

**SECTION:** Section B; Column 0; Business/Financial Desk; Pg. 5

**LENGTH:** 209 words

**Acupuncture** is a **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** that has been in use for thousands of years.

At your first evaluation, a practitioner will examine your tongue for clues like cracks and discolorations, take your pulse and ask numerous questions to determine what might be causing your symptoms.

The practitioner will then insert fine needles at specific points to unblock the flow of qi, or energy, in your body. Sound like hocus pocus?

Many Western doctors think not.

''Acupuncture is a system of correspondences,'' said Vitaly Napadow, an assistant professor at Harvard Medical School, who conducts research on how acupuncture affects the brain. ''Different ailments or diseases can be explained through traditional Chinese medical theory or through modern biomedical physiology, with sometimes interesting correspondence between the two,'' said Dr. Napadow, who has a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering and is also a licensed acupuncturist.

''I've been practicing for eight years and have seen acupuncture help with surprisingly diverse issues, like plantar fasciitis and diabetic neuropathy,'' he said. ''Acupuncture affects many systems in the body, including parts of the brain that are involved with processing emotion and pain.'' LESLEY ALDERMAN

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The New York Times

October 11, 1990, Thursday, Late Edition - Final

**Mother Gets 2 Months To Treat Daughter, 7**

**BYLINE:** AP

**SECTION:** Section B; Page 2, Column 6; Metropolitan Desk

**LENGTH:** 181 words

**DATELINE:** HARTFORD, Oct. 10

A Chinese woman who has fought state attempts to use surgery to treat her 7-year-old daughter has won the right to try **traditional Chinese medicine** but may be forced to agree to surgery later.

Judge T. Emmet Clarie of Federal District Court Tuesday gave the mother, Juliet Cheng, two months to try herbs, **acupuncture,** vitamins and physical therapy to treat her daughter for severe juvenile rheumatoid arthritis.

But Ms. Cheng will not be allowed to take Shirley back to China for treatment as she had hoped.

Under the agreement, Ms. Cheng will have to keep her daughter in the United States while she receives traditional Chinese treatment over the next two months. Ms. Cheng will also have to accept a final recommendation from a panel of three physicians who will examine the girl after the trial period.

Doctors at Newington Children's Hospital have said surgery on tissue around joints in Shirley's legs would help her walk again. But her mother, who has taken the girl to China for treatment four times, insists that only traditional Chinese medicine can help her daughter.

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

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