The medical world is on a changing trend, one that is moving us closer to the holistic end of medicine. In every area of medicine “new” treatments (acupuncture, herbs, et.) are being added to the basic treatment plan of doctors around the world. The treatment of acupuncture on pregnant women who have babies in the breeched position is an area of great interest. To understand how acupuncture works it is best to start at the begging.

Acupuncture is believed to have originated in North India or Tibet; the idea then migrated to China, where it progressed to the basic acupuncture of the nineteenth century. The first theories were written down by Shen Nung in the Huang Di Nei Jing, a medical reference book, 4,700 years before the Europeans “discovered” the theories (Singer). Shen Nungs’ theories were metaphysical in nature, based on numerology and the philosophy of Taoism (Gaynor 876). One story that has been told from one generation of veterinarians to another is that a when warhorse was struck with an arrow in a particular location on their body, they recovered from other ailments. Supposedly medical professionals go on to correlate these findings to subsequently treat human and animal patients in a more elegant manner later on in history (Schoen 5).

The first theory of acupuncture is based off of Chi, also spelled Qi. Qi is “matter on the verge of becoming energy; it is energy on the verge of becoming matter; it is tangible and it is intangible. Qi is necessary to digest food, but the food itself creates the growth” (Schoen and Wynn 134) Chi, is an energy force running through the entire body (Singer) that controls harmony within the body (Schoen and Wynn 134). Western medicine calls that energy force bio-electric energy (Stone). Qi energy travels through fourteen meridians, or channels, that run from one’s head down to the tips of ones toes. This energy is believed to be essential for all life’s activities: sprit, emotions, mental being and physical being (Singer). To acquire Qi, one must get it through the environment in the forms of nutrition and respiration. The energy is then absorbed by certain organs, stored, and then redistributed by other organs (Schoen and Wynn 134).

Through out the body there are six different types of Qi. Their names are determined by where in the body it is located and what its function is. The different types are organ, channel/meridian, nutritive, defensive (or Wei Qi), and Gathering and Parental (Schoen and Wynn 134). Each type is responsible for certain functions such as, promotion of movement through the body, outer defense against infections, transformation of one substance into something useful for the body, retention of organelles, the warming of the body through vitality, and finally, nourishment by circulating blood throughout the body (135). Through the balance of Q,i one’s body stays in balance and harmony with one’s environment.

When diagnosing a patient for treatment with acupuncture, it is good to look for patterns in the Qi that have become unbalanced. Qi flows up and down pathways and when the flow of Qi is insufficient, unbalanced, or interrupted, Yin and Yang become unbalanced and illness will occur (Schoen 135). Deficient Qi is when an organ does not have enough Qi; one with a deficient Qi appears fatigued, weak, or has a weak appetite. Stagnate Qi is a disturbance due to trauma, pathogens, or emotions. Swelling, dysphea, or a blockage of blood flow can result. Rebellious Qi is when the normal movement of the Qi are reversed, resulting in vomiting or nausea. Lastly, Collapse Qi is when an organ or meridian cannot perform properly. Gross abnormalities such as hernias can result and, if they are not taken care of, death could result (Schoen 135). By knowing the ailment, a doctor can properly choose the correct points to insert the needles to provide care.

When talking about Qi, it is a good idea to understand the concept of Yin and Yang. Qi is a mixture of the opposing forces Yin and Yang (134). To understand Yin and Yang compare it to the sun cycle. For life to exist on earth there has to be an

equal balance of sunlight and darkness. Yang is like the sun: hot, bright, hyper, day, active. Yin is like the moon: cold, dark, hypo, night, passive. Neither Yin nor Yang can exist with out the other, just as the earth could not survive in totally darkness, or total sun (Schoen and Wynn 135). Yin and Yang are constantly changing state, trying to achieve the best situation for the surroundings. When they become unbalanced natural calamities occur in nature and disease in humans or animals can occur (Stone).

A treatment of acupuncture is a way to properly fix transformations in one’s Qi. Hair thin needles are placed into a meridian at an acupuncture point, which is a point where the meridian comes to the surface of ones skin (Singer). There is a total of two thousand acupoints; however, a doctor would only include about 150 in their practice (qtd. In Schoen and Wynn 138). There are nine types of needles; however, only six are

commonly used and they are usually disposable. The needles are inserted anywhere from fifteen to ninety degree angles with skin depending on the skin surface and the treatment being given. Some techniques applied to the needles to further help the patient are: rising and thrusting, twirling, or a combination of the three. Vibrations are created by plucking, scraping or trembling. By using these techniques one will experience a sensation through out their body called deqi (Singer). This sensation is the result of movement of one’s chi to help heal, or cure the illness presented.

Breeched Births

Around the eighth month of pregnancy, a baby will settle into position in a woman’s uterus after weeks of floating free. By this time there's not much room, so most babies make best use of their limited space by settling into a vertical, head-down arrangement called the vertex position (Fig. 4). 96 per cent of babies will have assumed this position, but a few, about three or four per cent, will settle into a bottom-first, or breech, position (Fig 5).

Acupuncture

The point used is Bladder 67, also known as the Zhiyin point. The point is located on the outside of the little toe (Fig. 1). The bladder meridian runs around the abdomen area, promoting movement in the baby (Fig 3). The best way to stimulate this point is through heat from a moxa stick (Fig 4). One will experience a pleasant feeling of warmth in the toes, this is gentle treatment, and will not cause pain or burning. Remove the moxa stick when it starts to become uncomfortable. Then repeat the procedure on the right foot.

Continue in this, alternating between the right and left foot, for a total of ten to fifteen minutes. Repeat the whole procedure twice a day for maximum of five days, most babies turn within 3 days. Stop the using technique when the baby turns to the head-first potion, because it can turn back! (Pedley) Author : Robert Pedley, [The Acupuncture Clinic](http://users.quista.net/acuclinic/index.html), Slough, UK.

The best time to use this procedure is between 28 and 34 weeks. If one is less than 28 weeks pregnant, the baby is still pretty mobile and will probably turn on its own. Between 28 and 34 weeks into ones pregnancy, there is still a good chance that the baby will turn spontaneously and this is the best time to use the Zhiyin acupuncture technique in order to encourage it to move. 35 or 36 weeks into pregnancy, one should only attempt it with the approval of a doctor or midwife. It is not suitable if one is more than 36 weeks pregnant (Pedley).

Breech Version (External Cephalic Version)

Breech version has been practiced since antiquity; it is the turning of the fetus artificially while it is inside the uterus. This is done by the doctor placing his/her hands on the abdominal wall and manually rotating the baby into a vertex presentation. This has traditionally been done between 30 and 40 weeks of pregnancy.

The success rate of performing a breech version is around 50%, and once the baby is converted to a vertex presentation, it normally remains that way through the rest of the pregnancy. This is truer the closer the baby is rotated to its due date, although the ability to convert the baby to vertex presentation becomes more difficult the closer a baby gets to its due date.

When the procedure is initiated, the patient is brought to the delivery room and monitored for approximately 20 to 30 minutes to confirm that the patient is not laboring, that there is a normally reactive heart rate, and that there is no abnormality with the heart rate. An abdominal exam and ultrasound are performed to confirm that the baby is breech. Once this is completed, an IV is begun and a medication (Ritodrine) is given intravenously to further quiet the uterus. This medication runs for approximately 30 minutes. Once these procedures have been completed, the version is begun. The version does not last longer than about 5 minutes. The obstetrician palpates both ends of the baby. He/she then attempts to rotate the head end of the baby toward the pelvis while pushing up the bottom and the feet. This part of the procedure is usually painful even when patients are given medication. Most often, the version is completed rapidly if it is to be successful. If it is unsuccessful after several tries, we will usually desist from the procedure; although it is felt that it can be continued for about 5 minutes. Once the version is completed, we then continue to monitor the baby for another 30 to 60 minutes. This again confirms that the fetus is doing well and that the patient can be safely sent home. (*Alexander T. Massengale, MD)* [*http://www.birthcenters.org/learningcenter/*](http://www.birthcenters.org/learningcenter/)