

Iffley Acupuncture Clinic



Website Content

Traditional Chinese Medicine

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Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is the blanket term used to describe a wider system traditional medical practice in China. This includes four main branches of TCM including acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, Tui Na massage and finally, Qigong. The term TCM was initially used by colleges of Traditional Chinese Medicine in modern China, where there had been an attempt to unify the actual diversity of the above systems within a comparatively new common framework. Acupuncture and herbal practitioners in the west who wished to convey the fact that they were practicing within these principles, subsequently adopted the same term.

In actual fact there remains a diversity of practice within the acupuncture profession in China and similarly, in the west. However a thorough background in TCM theory enables the practitioner to apply a common knowledge and understanding to and within all disciplines, and provides the foundation for sharing conventions. Thus TCM practitioners are perhaps utilising a more systematic approach than was previously available.

After completing their training in all TCM branches, Chinese doctors will subsequently specialise in one. This is contrasted in the UK, where the majority of TCM practitioners will have initially trained in acupuncture and then received a supplementary training in either Chinese Herbal medicine or Tui Na, or both. Whilst UK practitioners of TCM may offer only one of the disciplines, they may also frequently offer a range of therapies with acupuncture predominating.

One of the big advantages of this system is that practitioners have at their disposal a greater arsenal of treatments with which to fight disease and promote health and wellbeing. Whilst the TCM practitioner might in a given instance use only one therapy such as acupuncture, they may in another, choose also to potentiate this treatment by prescribing Chinese herbal medicine and or applying Tui Na massage. Alternatively one branch can be used to treat one aspect of a person's condition, whilst another used to address a different component. For example if we return to our example of headaches ([link to appropriate document](#)), the practitioner might use acupuncture to subdue rising Qi in the Liver and gallbladder channels and ease the pain, whilst herbs

might be used to nourish the deficiency of yin or blood that often underlies the disharmony. In addition, if there is a considerable stress component leading to congestion of channels in the neck and shoulders, they might then also use Tui Na to ease and relax the muscles. This is not to say that one of these is insufficient, only that a choice is available, and when a patient does not seem to be responding as favourably as expected to one of them, then other routes are readily applicable.

Yet another advantage of being able to access Chinese herbal medicine is that patients can take their herbs on a daily basis, meaning that their treatment is sustained and working between acupuncture sessions. In some instances this can mean that the frequency of acupuncture treatment can be reduced; although this might prove more favourable when the results of acupuncture become more sustained. Similarly, where patients are frightened by acupuncture, Tui Na can offer a very valuable alternative in certain circumstances and might indeed, be the treatment of choice for infants or otherwise.

Acupuncture:

Please see document [“What is acupuncture?”](#)

Chinese Patent Herbal Medicine.

In spite of the fact that we see isolated Chinese herbs such as Ginseng and Dang Gui available in health food stores, it is quite rare to find a practitioner of Chinese herbal medicine prescribing a single herb remedy.



Quite the opposite in fact; prescriptions are generally made up of a number of different herbs/components which either complement, potentiate or serve to exert a balancing influence on the formula. In addition the term ‘herbal medicine’ is not wholly correct; whilst

the Chinese Materia Medica most definitely includes herbs, it may also include roots, rhizomes, barks, flowers and fruits from a wider range of plants, and also include

shells and minerals and indeed, components of animal origin. The latter however making up a tiny proportion of the vast arsenal of constituents.

Readers need to be assured that any prescription they receive at the Iffley Acupuncture Clinic will only contain products of plant origin, and only those deemed acceptable by the British Acupuncture Council and the.....Agency. All products adhere to Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and are subjected to rigorous testing and are free of any toxic materials, pesticide residues etc.

Each herb or otherwise is classified according to its most pronounced function and are thus assigned to the category of herbs that either Tonify Qi or Yang, Nourish Blood, Yin or Jing, or conversely, those that Astringe, Resolve Phlegm or Drain Damp, Stop Bleeding or Invigorate Blood etc. Individual herbs are most commonly combined in defined quantities to create a formula which itself might also be assigned to the same category or function. Some herbs have more than one function or indeed several and may therefore be included in prescriptions of a different category. Many of these formulae are very old and indeed form the basis of many variations and in turn, more modern formulae. It is the more established and foundation formulas that form the basis for patent herbal prescriptions.

Most patent medicines come in tablet or capsule form and are termed Chinese Patent Herbal Medicines. Whilst the traditional herbalist will frequently make additions or subtractions from the foundation formulae, or indeed increase or decrease the dosage of a given herb within a formula, practitioners of Patent medicine are unable to do this. The advantage of this adaptation is that prescriptions can be adjusted according to the individual needs of a patient. However, this does not mean that the application of Patent medicine is inflexible; Patents can be combined or indeed prescribed in different combinations, to be administered at different intervals throughout the day or throughout the month. It is quite common for example, for formulae to be prescribed according to the phase of the menstrual cycle; thereby applying an appropriate strategy at each stage.

Having completed a post-graduate training at the College of Integrated Chinese Medicine, Jonathan Bruce is qualified to prescribe Chinese Herbal Patent Medicine. His experience has shown that patients are seemingly more likely to take Patent formulae. They are relatively easy to take and are therefore often preferred by patients, who have busy lifestyles or are unable to tolerate the taste of a traditional decoction. Whilst Patents are not as strong or potent; their action generally more gentle, they can make a very real difference to people's wellbeing. They are extremely safe and patients can be assured that patent medicines supplied by the clinic of an extremely high quality and comply with Good Manufacturing Practice.

Tui Na

Tui Na or Chinese medical massage is one of the four main branches of Traditional Chinese Medicine and perhaps the oldest. It differs quite considerably from the massage systems that we are more familiar with in the west; rather than purely seeking a means of relaxation and body conditioning, it is used also to treat a range of illnesses and conditions. As with the other main branches, it is underpinned by the



same theoretical framework as acupuncture and herbal medicine and as such can only be appropriately applied by those with a sound foundation within it. Thus a patient attending the clinic for Tui Na will undergo the same stringent diagnostic process, including Enquiry, Palpation, Inspection/observation and by hearing and smelling.

It's techniques are numerous and it's application is undertaken via the meridian system, the acupuncture points, organs as well as the body tissues. It should not be confused with simple acupressure that largely relies on only one of the many techniques used in Tui Na. When the practitioner is applying Tui Na, he or she will have in mind a clear diagnosis and in turn, appropriate treatment principles. Whilst the techniques will have

undoubted influence on the underlying tissues, the practitioner will also be seeking a resolution to the disharmony that has given rise to the presenting symptoms. However, although its techniques are frequently more vigorous than other more sensual schools of massage, the patient often encounters a sense of wellbeing and feelings of relaxation that surpasses them.

Successful application is also dependent upon the wellbeing of the practitioner and this is most frequently achieved through the practice of Qigong and other forms of internal physical training. When the practitioner has learnt to experience and direct their own Qi through Qigong training, they are subsequently more likely to be able to influence the Qi in their patients. Some rely more on the prescribed use and repetition of given techniques to achieve a given goal, whilst others may limit the number of applications and rely more on developing their 'Yi' or intention to influence the energy within their recipients.

Having trained in both schools of thought, Jonathan tends to favour the latter, although he finds that the combination of both or versatility, achieves more favourable results. Some patients' respond to a more technique based approach, whilst others, seemingly favour a subtler, Qi based one.