



*Presentation notes from Dr. Michael Salewski  
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## TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

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The Chinese healing art of acupuncture dates back for thousands of years. Though its exact age is uncertain, up until the twentieth century, much of the population of the world was uninformed about acupuncture, its origins, and its capacity to promote and maintain good health. Today in most western cultures it is considered a new alternative medicine. Used for over 3,500 years in China on both animals and humans, acupuncture is not only safe, it is the favored treatment for one quarter of the world's population. As physicians are doing with many alternative treatments for humans, veterinarians are increasingly combining acupuncture with Western treatments and medications. This 'complementary' veterinary medicine often provides patients with the greatest benefits and faster recovery times. As Hippocrates stated, "Natural forces within us are the true healers of disease."

Acupuncture acts by stimulating specific spots in the body with needles, lasers, heat and massage to balance energy and promote healing. There is a legend that it began almost 4,000 years ago in China when horses that had been previously injured were pierced with arrows in battle, and were observed to heal more quickly than others.

Since 1996 the American Veterinary Medical Association has considered acupuncture an integral part of veterinary medicine, and the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association has more than 700 members, many of whom practice acupuncture. Acupuncture can treat animal illnesses ranging from arthritis to asthma, and even behavior problems. It is also gaining increasing popularity as an alternative to painkillers and surgery.

Like all holistic veterinary treatments, acupuncture looks at the whole body, not just isolated parts. Instead of focusing on simply alleviating symptoms, it works to resolve the cause and the problem. It looks beyond the animal's medical background to her environment, nutrition, behavior patterns and relationships.

Doctors insert thin, flexible, sterile, stainless steel needles at precise points on your animal's body to stimulate the nervous system and to help promote his natural healing abilities. Studies show that acupuncture causes the release of hormones, cortisones and natural painkillers such as endorphins, among other substances, which accounts for its extraordinary effects.

*Parts of the section above were excerpted from "Veterinary Acupuncture Goes Mainstream" by Elizabeth Chapman, published in Bark 12.*

### THEORY

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#### PATTERNS

Western medicine utilizes linear thinking. For example, trauma causes inflammation, which causes pain that causes lameness. Eastern medicine looks at the pattern. In this example the doctor might say that the same horse has a pattern of imbalance that shows up as pain, swelling and heat. The practitioner then seeks to return the patient to normality by changing the pattern.

**Yin and Yang is the most fundamental aspect of Chinese medicine.**

One of the most important concepts of Chinese medicine is that of natural balance. From this idea of balance arises the fundamental theory of yin and yang. According to this theory, life takes place in the alternating rhythm of yin and yang.

- Yin and Yang are in opposition
- Yin and Yang are interdependent
- Yin and Yang consume each other
- Yin and yang transform into each other

Examples of Yin vs. Yang

<u>Yin</u>	<u>Yang</u>
Earth	Heaven
Interior	Exterior
Inactive	Active
Night	Day
Solid	Gas
Blood	Qi

FUNDAMENTAL MATERIAL

Qi-Basal body energy

- Prenatal Qi (Yuan Qi) - source Qi
- Air Qi (Qin Qi) - air that enters the body
- Nutritive Qi (Ying Qi) - nourishes body
- Defensive Qi (Wei Qi) - defends and warms
- Channel Qi (Zhen Qi) - runs in channels
- Organ Qi (Zang Fu Qi) - in organs

**Blood** - In Chinese medicine, Blood is a vital substance that circulates through the body nourishing and moistening. It is also responsible for the health of bones, tendons, and joints and is the material foundation of mental activity.

**Essence** - This can be thought of as a body's "constitution" or "genetic vitality".

**Spirit (Shen)** - This is mental function.

**Fluids** - All other body fluids other than blood (sweat, saliva, urine, etc.), these fluids nourish and moisten various parts of the body to a lesser extent than Blood.

**Channels** - The Qi of the body circulates through channels, also called meridians. Acupuncture points are found on the parts of these channels that are close to the skin.

**Disease** - Chinese theory holds that disease is created by exogenous factors that create specific patterns in the body.

**Organ Systems** - In Chinese Medicine, the concept of "Organs" is semi-abstract. Although there may be a physical structure associated with an Organ, its properties and the physiology it controls are more important. The organs are paired in Yin/Yang function and are listed in greater detail in the following tables.

### YIN ORGANS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

<b>Yin Organ</b>	Heart & Pericardium	Lung	Spleen	Liver	Kidney
<b>Controls</b>	Supreme controller	Receives Qi from heaven	Transformation & Transportation	Planning	Water
<b>Related Fu (Yang) Organ</b>	Small Intestine (H) San Jiao (P)	Large Intestine	Stomach	Gallbladder	Urinary Bladder
<b>Sense Organ</b>	Tongue	Nose	Mouth	Eyes	Ears
<b>Shows</b>	Complexion	Body Hair	Lips	Nails (Hooves)	Head Hair (Mane)
<b>Tissue</b>	Blood Vessels	Skin	Muscles	Tendons & Ligaments	Bone & Teeth
<b>Fluids</b>	Sweat	Nasal Discharge	Saliva	Tears	Semen
<b>Mood</b>	Joy	Grief	Worry	Anger	Fear
<b>Functions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protects Heart (P)</li> <li>2. Houses Shen</li> <li>3. Controls Blood</li> <li>4. Circulate</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Respiration</li> <li>2. Wei Qi</li> <li>3. Opens water passage</li> <li>4. Descending &amp; Dispersing (Xuan Fa)</li> <li>5. Skin, hair &amp; pores</li> <li>6. Root of Qi</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transportation</li> <li>2. Transformation</li> <li>3. Holds blood in</li> <li>4. Source of Qi</li> <li>5. Food metabolism</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regulates Qi &amp; emotions</li> <li>2. Stores blood</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stores Essence</li> <li>2. Water metabolism</li> <li>3. Growth</li> <li>4. Reproduction</li> </ol>

### YANG ORGANS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

<b>Small Intestine</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accepts rotted food and water from stomach</li> <li>2. Separates the pure and impure parts from food and water</li> <li>3. Transports impure to large intestine</li> </ol>
<b>Large Intestine Stomach</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Makes and discharges the stool with the help of lung and stomach Qi.</li> <li>1. Rots food and water</li> <li>2. Transports to small intestine</li> <li>3. Has a descending function</li> <li>4. Prefers moisture, dislikes dryness</li> </ol>
<b>Gallbladder</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Horses do not have a structural gallbladder but do have a physiological gallbladder as it pertains to Chinese medicine.</li> <li>2. Discharges bile.</li> <li>3. In charge of decision-making.</li> <li>4. Organ of bravery</li> </ol>
<b>Urinary Bladder</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stores body fluid, water and urine</li> <li>2. Makes urine with the help of kidney Qi.</li> <li>3. Discharges urine.</li> </ol>
<b>San Jiao</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transports water.</li> <li>2. Transports Qi.</li> <li>3. Connects organs.</li> </ol>
<b>Extraordinary</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consists of gallbladder, bone, blood vessels, spinal cord, marrow, brain and uterus.</li> </ol>

## MECHANISMS OF DISEASE

- **Wind** - symptoms are sudden and change quickly. Movements may be quick and jerky.
- **Cold** - The body feels cold. Tissues contract with spasms or cramps. Discharges are white and watery. Skin and/or tongue may be bluish or purple.
- **Heat** - The body feels hot. There is thirst and/or dry stools. Excretions are dark, yellow, and sticky and/or smell foul. Skin and/or tongue may be red.
- **Dampness** - There is swelling or edema. Movement is difficult and pain is fixed.
- **Dryness** - The membranes are dry. The skin may be flaky. There may be a dry cough.
- **Summer heat** - Heat and Damp symptoms together and appear quickly.
- **Phlegm** - This is a unique concept in Chinese medicine. It may include the typical phlegm we associate with the lungs but it may also include any fixed swellings like tumors or splints. It may also be less visible and cause more of a physiologic dysfunction like some neurological diseases.

## DIAGNOSIS

**Eight Principles** - To make a diagnosis, classifying findings by the eight divisions identifies the pattern.

- **Exterior/interior** - Exterior symptoms occur on or in the outer body (i.e. skin, muscles). Interior affects the Organs (i.e. a deep cough and the Lung).
- **Hot/cold** – Symptoms described in Cold and Heat in Mechanisms above.
- **Excess/deficient** - Excess is more than normal (obesity, rapid pulse) while a deficiency is typically less than normal (thin, weak).
- **Yin/yang** - Symptoms can also be described as Yin or Yang as described earlier.

## TREATMENT

Once a diagnosis is made, the decision to use acupuncture, herbs or both is up to the practitioner. Typical cases for these therapies are lameness of unknown origin, chronic unresolved medical cases, or cases where there are side effects from conventional medication.

## ACUPUNCTURE

This therapy is very good for accessing and moving Qi in the exterior body parts. For musculoskeletal problems it works very well, but it is good treatment for any medical problem, especially in conjunction with herbal formulas.

### Choosing points

There are hundreds of points to choose from, and most have specific individual actions. Many times, horses with the same medical problem (i.e. spavin) may be treated using different points because of slight differences in their diagnosis. Diagnosis identifies the pattern using the definitions mentioned above. For example: deficient spleen Qi, excess heat in the blood.

### Choosing technique:

1. Dry needle – needles only
2. Moxibustion – burning herb on needle or next to skin.
3. Electroacupuncture – running current from needle to needle.
4. “Aquapuncture” - injecting various compounds into acupuncture points.

## HERBAL FORMULAS

Like acupuncture, herbal medicine can be used for any diagnosed condition but tend to be really effective for interior syndromes. There are hundreds of established formulas and individual herbs, so unlike pharmaceuticals a specific treatment can be administered .

**Patent medicines** - Established formulas in tablet form. May require many, many pills for horse-sized dose. Also, some products manufactured in China may have other medicines in them due to lower manufacturing standards in China.

**Customizing** - Raw or freeze dried herbs can easily be used to combine established formulas or construct a specific formula for the individual.

**Administering** - because most of the ingredients are plant based horses readily eat formulas mixed with feed.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

Results from acupuncture may take three to five treatments, so don't get discouraged if nothing happens right away. The body is trying to rebalance itself. With herbal remedies, however, expect to see improvement within a few days. With both therapies symptoms may actually worsen at first, before making a change for the better.

## OTHER ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

**Chiropractic** – Physical manipulation of the spinal joints in order to return normal range of motion to the spinal column.

**Homeopathy** - Minute quantities of herbs and other compounds make up homeopathic remedies. The homeopathic system is similar to Chinese medicine in that the goal is to correct an imbalance in the body especially at the energetic level. There is no consensus on how the non-therapeutic doses of compounds work in the body, but it is generally thought that it is a stimulus for the body to correct itself similar to the stimulus from acupuncture.

**Laser** - low level “cold” lasers are used therapeutically. They are most effectively used to stimulate acupuncture or trigger points and therefore require accuracy. When used correctly they can be effective for pain relief.

**Magnets** - Research is unclear, magnets may increase blood flow and/or influence cell membranes to speed healing. Magnetic fields generated by electricity (pulse magnetic field therapy or PMFT) appear to achieve benefit most consistently.

**Massage** - As chiropractic is a therapy for the skeleton, massage is a therapy for the soft tissue, especially muscle. Very effective when used by itself and when paired with chiropractic.

**Supplements** - Supplements like glucosamine, msm, and various vitamins can improve joint and overall health through mechanisms that vary greatly, and can be very effective when used correctly.

**Ultrasound** - Deep heating of tissue that can act as a “micro-massage” with benefits at the muscular and cellular level. Using ultrasound too long or deep can cause tissue damage.

**Western Herbology** - North American herbs used mainly like traditional pharmacological medicines and are chosen based on how they act on symptoms.

#### WHEN WESTERN MEDICINE IS A BETTER CHOICE

- **Emergency trauma** – lacerations, colic
- **Cancer**
- **Deworming** – no available studies have shown anything to work more safely or effectively than existing wormers on the market.
- **Surgical conditions** – fractures, arthroscopic conditions, torsions of the intestine
- **Acute bacterial infections** – pneumonia, peritonitis, etc.

#### IN CLOSING

Complementary and alternative medicine covers a broad range of healing philosophies, approaches, and therapies. Therapies termed “holistic” generally mean that the health care practitioner considers the whole animal, including physical, mental, and emotional aspects. These treatments and therapies are used in a variety of ways. Therapies used alone are often referred to as alternative, those used in combination with other alternative therapies, or in addition to conventional therapies are sometimes referred to as complementary. Some approaches are consistent with physiological principles of Western medicine, while others constitute healing systems with a different origin. While some therapies are far outside the realm of accepted Western medical theory and practice, others are becoming established in mainstream medicine.

Alternative medicine and complementary medicine is often a very valid choice for the treatment of the equine athlete. It is important to remember that these therapies are not benign and can be harmful if practiced by untrained or poorly trained individuals. When choosing this pathway use the same discretion as you would in choosing any health care practitioner, these systems are no less difficult to learn and practice than conventional ones. Hopefully this lecture has provided some insight into the methods a holistic veterinarian might employ to diagnose and treat horses and offered some options that might have otherwise been overlooked or dismissed.