

Balance

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Your attitude toward your life, relationships, chosen profession and the projects you are currently involved with are either contributing to the depletion or cultivation of your *qi* and *jing*. In choosing an occupation that is fulfilling to you and of service to others, you have a great opportunity to establish and maintain a balanced lifestyle. Through expanding your involvement with the field of Oriental medicine (OM), you can enhance your relationship with your profession and improve your ability to serve others, while simultaneously increasing your experience and knowledge. Through managing a balanced practice, being careful to not exhaust yourself, making your work environment harmonious and pleasant, and by furthering your education and skills, you can support the unobstructed flow of *qi* within your body and conserve and support your *jing*.

Most of you are well aware of the concepts of *qi* and *jing*. *Qi* can be considered a measure of your vitality. Healthy *qi* can manifest as optimal functioning of the internal organs, smooth and unobstructed circulation or "flow" within your body, and perhaps even in your ability to accomplish and reach goals in life. *Qi* is derived from food, air/breath, and the *jing*/essence of the kidneys. Every aspect of your lifestyle determines the rate of consumption of *qi*. Your attitudes, thoughts, feelings and patterns also contribute to the utilization of *qi*. It is well-known that therapeutic exercise, including *t'ai ch'i* and *qi gong*, acupuncture, meditation and herbal medicine can be used to maximize *qi* flow and clear obstructions, and therefore disease.

Jing is a deeper essence. The kidneys store *jing*, the quality and quantity of which determine your vitality, resistance to disease, and longevity. You are born with congenital *jing*, the quality and amount determined by the health and constitution of your parents at the time of your conception, incubation and birth. You only inherit a specific amount, and when it's used up, you're dead. However, acquired *jing* can be extracted from food, herbal medicine, therapeutic exercise and meditation. Acquired *jing* can greatly enhance the activity of your congenital *jing*. There cannot be an overabundance of *jing*. Stress, fear, lust and overwork will also deplete *jing*. Deficiency of *jing* can retard physical and mental growth, slow maturation, and lead to deficient brain function, weak legs and bones, impotence and other reproductive problems, as well as early senility.

Some of the projects and areas I've delved into over the past several years have deepened my connection to, involvement with, and rewards from the field of OM. In the early 1990s, when patients asked me if I could treat them or family members while they were receiving medical care at the local hospital, I was unable to accommodate their needs. Even though, in most cases, their attending physician approved the treatment, I was unable to legally perform acupuncture in the hospital because I was not on the medical staff. In other words, the patient wanted the service and the physician supported the service, but the institution could not endorse it until an avenue was created to credential acupuncture practitioners as members of the medical staff.

My first inquiries to the administration of the hospital as to how I might join the medical staff were ignored, even in writing. I became more and more persistent as the requests for acupuncture treatment at the hospital increased. I requested to meet with the executive director and began to frequent the executive offices, making my presence known. Things soon began to shift when a new

director was hired who had an interest in expanding the services offered at the hospital. At the same time, several other practitioners joined the cause, and an osteopathic physician on the staff took interest and got involved. At a preliminary meeting, we launched a steering committee to explore the possibility of establishing a department of complementary medicine within the hospital. For over a year, we met and worked on the proposed structure of the department, credentialing guidelines, peer review, etc. Eventually, we came to a compromise with the board, and instead of establishing our new department, expanded the "allied health practitioner" category to include acupuncture, chiropractic, naturopathy and massage.

Serving as a member of the allied health medical staff has allowed me to be able to serve community members who, for one reason or another, have ended up in the hospital, and in many cases allow them a shorter hospital stay, a reduction in medication and/or improved outcomes. Being an integral part of the expansion of medical services at the local hospital, and working in tandem with MDs on challenging cases, has enriched my professional experience and enhanced my clinical skills.

Another wonderful experience has been working as a research consultant. I began years ago as a volunteer, consulting for professional researchers who were interested in conducting acupuncture research. I helped by applying my clinical experience to assist them in shaping their protocols. Once involved, I met researchers who recruited me to serve as a consultant for protocols they were conducting on evaluating acupuncture's efficacy in treating chronic low back pain. One of the challenges I faced was facilitating discussions among a panel of acupuncture "experts" via a teleconference. The panel was made up of practitioners from diverse backgrounds, many of whom had very different views on the optimal treatment approach, but in time we reached a consensus and were able to guide the parameters of the study effectively. After that experience, I was offered a position as a consultant and safety expert for another research study. One of the most intriguing questions I was recently asked was whether or not intention is a critical component during sham acupuncture.

Stepping out of my familiar daily routine and welcoming new professional experiences has provided me with inspiration and fulfillment. I have found new ways to improve my understanding, skills - and myself, as well as expand and enrich my involvement with the field of OM. I have slowed my private practice to a pace, which allows me to remain strong and balanced, and have created a beautiful and healing work environment (with my wife's vision and creative touch). In so doing, I am supporting harmonious *qi* flow and the cultivation of *qi* and *jing*. This allows me to be of greater service to those who come seeking support and guidance. Participating in the political arena of OM has been challenging of late. However, I am grateful to this medicine and to those who have carefully passed on traditional medical knowledge over the years, for the many lessons I have learned and continue to learn, and for the opportunity to serve and support others in their search for health, balance, and wellness.

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