

TCM Gets Another Boost From Oprah Winfrey

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"The Oprah Winfrey Show" recently featured acupressure as part of the show's recurring health segment titled "Ask Dr. Oz." The May 21 episode followed up on a February show in which Dr. Mehmet Oz, vice chair of surgery and professor of cardiac surgery at Columbia University, and founder and director of the complementary medicine program at New York Presbyterian Columbia, introduced Oprah's audience of 48 million Americans to acupuncture. The May 21 show offered additional support for TCM, this time by focusing on acupressure.

Oprah begins the acupressure segment with a statement in support of Eastern medicine: "Dr. Oz believes that the future of medicine lies in the ancient healing arts. That's why we love him so much, because he likes to combine Eastern and Western medicine, like acupuncture and massage."

Based on the interest generated by the Feb. 13 acupuncture episode, Dr. Oz introduces acupressure as another helpful way to relieve stress, headaches and nausea: "Acupressure is something I have done to myself quite frequently. It works for a lot of folks." He proceeds to describe the fundamentals of acupressure, starting with a lesson in energy meridians and the way those lines of energy get disrupted, causing headaches and various aches and pains.

"Aren't we just an energy field, anyway?" asks Oprah.

"Most of what we are is just tiny little elements of protons and matter with energy holding us together," replies Dr. Oz, "so it's not crazy to think that because we're made of energy, we would have energy streams that we can refer to. The problem is that in Western medicine, because we can't see them, we can't get our arms around them, we can't treat them. This is part of the challenge for us as a people to start thinking differently about the way our bodies work."

"Do a lot of doctors believe we're energy?" Oprah inquires.

"I think there are a lot of physicians, especially cutting-edge, who realize we don't have all the answers. ... There are a lot of physicians who believe energy has something to do with it," responds Dr. Oz.

To demonstrate how easy (and painless) acupressure is, Dr. Oz chooses a point between Oprah's thumb and index finger and applies pressure for a few moments. He explains that this point is effective for headaches because it releases endorphins. He also applies pressure to a point three finger lengths above Oprah's wrist, between the tendons, to relieve motion sickness. Then he shows Oprah a stress-relieving pressure point where the trapezius muscle in the shoulder becomes the neck.

"Feels good to me," says Oprah.

Next, Dr. Oz takes off Oprah's shoe and applies pressure at the center of the base of her foot. Halfway up the side of the foot is another point to ease problems with menstruation, increase regularity and reduce bloating. Finally, Dr. Oz presses on the side of her foot just next to the small

toe, a point that helps resolve blurry vision and other eye problems. The look of delight on Oprah's face expresses her clear satisfaction with the acupressure treatment.

"Are you now combining in your thought process Eastern and Western medicine?" asks Oprah.

"Every patient that I operate on at New York Presbyterian hospital gets a reflexology-type treatment - a treatment that is based on energy and rejuvenating the patient," states Dr. Oz.

With this kind of continuing endorsement by a highly successful, knowledgeable physician on the most-watched daytime talk show in the U.S., the acupuncture and Oriental medicine profession can only gain credibility and visibility. For a complete review of Oprah's Feb. 13 episode featuring acupuncture, read "[The Globalization of Acupuncture and TCM](#)" in the April 2007 issue of *AT*.

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