

# Functional Medicine, Energy Medicine and TCM: A Powerful Integration

Darren Starwynn, OMD, LAc; Deborah Weiss, LAc, RN

If trendsetters are people who introduce large numbers of people to new, cutting-edge experiences then acupuncturists deserve that term. Although the roots of Chinese Medicine are ancient, its growing acceptance as a viable alternative to the limitations of modern medicine constitutes a new trend. If you study the history of Chinese Medicine you will see that there have been many trendsetters throughout the various dynasty periods of China that introduced new methods of acupuncture. Many of these were eventually assimilated and would now be considered part of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

This process of innovation has continued to this day. We would like to introduce you to some of the most exciting and powerful trends in our profession. One of them is the increasing use of functional medicine as an adjunct to acupuncture practice. The other is the integration of functional medicine and acupuncture with vibrational (energy) medicine.

What is Functional Medicine? How is it a derivative of TCM?

The paradigm of functional medicine (FM hereafter) is systems biology. It is a study of functional relationships in the body.

Observation and study of functional relationships is the observation and study of Energy. Like TCM, FM is a paradigm shift from organ-based diseases to functional dynamic systems and relationships.

Grounded in the *Zang-Fu*, the *Shen* and the manifestations of *qi* and Blood TCM is the oldest continually practiced medicine in the world. Therefore, we believe that FM is the 21st century scientific articulation of TCM.

FM core evaluations:	TCM core evaluation:
genetics	Heavenly Qi
diet/nutrition	Post-Heaven Qi
environmental exposure	External Pathogenic Influences
stress	emotions
exercise	movement
psycho-spiritual	Shen

Both FM and TCM require individualized diagnostic and therapeutic approaches.

TCM principle: No one symptom in and of itself holds any meaning outside the context of all presenting symptoms. Connecting all the dots is what gives rise to pattern differentiation/pattern

diagnosis.

Both TCM and FM demand critical thinking skills to diagnose and determine optimal treatment.

The need for functional medicine in acupuncture practices. The greatest contribution FM gives to TCM is the scientific articulation of Yin & Yang.

The value of this in practice is two-fold: One, as TCM practitioners we gain a deeper biological understanding of the bio-chemical correlations to energetic patterns. Two, this articulation broadens our communication with both patients and our allopathic colleagues. We can intelligently speak in two languages.

States vary widely in their scope of practice for LAc's. In Minnesota we cannot order or interpret lab tests. Therefore, I cannot fully practice FM, but what I continually hone from FM is a deeper understanding of pathology, physiology and pathophysiology. This strengthens my TCM diagnostic skills as well as my confidence in choosing treatment options for working energetically, especially treating with microcurrent.

What is energy medicine?

Over the last 100 years many scientists have demonstrated that biological systems are governed by electromagnetic fields. Rupert Sheldrake described a "morphic field" that surrounds all living things and guides their development and function. Harold Burr wrote about electrical fields that regulate and control living things as well as acting as a pattern for their forms. Popp proved that plants and other living things communicate with each other by means of bio-photon emissions.

I had an interesting insight when I visited a contract manufacturing business in Tucson, Ariz. One of their customers had a black box that contained an ultra-violet light source and a spectrometer. This device was used to positively identify pharmaceutical drugs so that dangerous errors were not made when they were given in hospitals. It worked by placing a pill in a holder, irradiating it with UV, and then analyzing the spectrum of colors that the pill emanated. Any drug could thereby be identified by its unique electro-magnetic spectrum. To me this suggests that the ultimate action of a drug takes place after it is metabolized and various colors of light are released. Light wavelengths rather than chemicals themselves were doing most of the therapeutic work.

This principle applies equally to foods, herbs and nutritional supplements.

We can therefore say that energy medicine is the medical art of "cutting out the middleman" of matter. Instead of a patient having to ingest a substance and then expend a great deal of energy and time to break it down, absorb it and process it, needed frequencies can be directly applied for therapeutic effect. Very efficient!

Energy medicine is also information medicine. Cells rely on low voltage electromagnetic circuits to transmit information while chemical circuits are used to transmit energy/power.

Information is yin and Energy is yang. All inputs into the body including food, toxins, stress, emotions are bits of electromagnetic information. Our body receives/absorbs these information bits, and assimilates them into chemical/hormonal signals manifested as energy/*qi*, Blood, fluids and *Shen*.

The type of information matters hugely. The human body follows the "accurate information in - accurate information out" and "garbage in - garbage out" principles of computers. The colors of antioxidant foods, the wavelengths of sunshine, positive or negative thoughts or pesticide residues

are all information bits that our body “reads” and processes.

Through the advances made in genetics, specifically epigenetics, we now know that genes can be unaffected or turned on based upon the information presented to them. This is an important understanding. Many diseases considered partially or wholly genetic such as heart disease, cancer or epilepsy could be switched on by having discordant information fed into the body. Genetics load the gun, lifestyle pulls the trigger.

FM - EM connections - why they complete each other

Practitioners of functional medicine use blood tests and other intakes to analyze the functions of the body. They look for missing pieces of the puzzle that can be restored using targeted foods and supplementation. This approach can be very effective when performed skillfully.

By adding needed frequencies of microcurrent and/or colors of therapeutic light through well-selected acupuncture points the benefits of functional medicine can be significantly enhanced. There are powerful benefits to both giving needed nutrients and also “cutting out the middleman” by applying direct energy applications. One of the most valuable methods of doing this is the application of microcurrent and color light to Mu and Shu points to directly target the Organs. I have written about this in previous issues of *Acupuncture Today*.

This synergy is so valuable because we live on many levels simultaneously. It is an accurate statement that we are “spiritual beings having a physical experience.” Our vibrationally dense physical bodies often lack essential nutrients, and supplementing those can improve many functions. Yet our bodies would be dead and inert without our energy bodies informing and enlivening them. Our energy bodies are exquisitely sensitive to colors and frequency fields. Just using physical interventions can eventually feed our energy bodies, but it is relatively inefficient compared to direct energy therapies.

We propose that this combination of functional medicine and energy medicine is a superior approach that can greatly enhance results for acupuncturists and related professionals. We will next present an example of a valuable therapeutic approach that uses both sides.

The Ideal Weight Program - Example of integration of FM and EM

Back to Epigenetics - Genetics load the gun, lifestyle pulls the trigger. Post-heaven *qi*, the information food gives, is the most powerful influence on the body. It is also a factor we have significant control of.

In 1350, a doctor of TCM wrote, “Doctors first, have the find the cause for an illness and determine which disharmony prevails. To balance this disharmony, the first and foremost measure is appropriate diet. It is not until this measure bears no result that one should use medicines.”

Dr. Mark Hyman, in his newly published book, *The Blood Sugar Solution* wrote; “Lifestyle diseases - heart disease, diabetes and cancer are all fueled by the same preventable risk factors: high blood pressure/triglycerides/sugar/insulin/cholesterol, obesity, physical inactivity and smoking. Medications do not address the cause of our afflictions. Poor diet, physical inactivity, stress and pollutants directly correlate to our level of health.”

These two physicians are declaring the same message 662 years apart! Even our current First Lady of the U.S. Michelle Obama has taken on lifestyle and childhood obesity by engaging school children in planting a White House organic garden.

Not only is the health of our nation at crisis, the financial burden of current allopathic medical treatment of diseases of lifestyle will bankrupt this country, and the root problem still won't be fixed, just poorly medicated and managed.

Embracing lifestyle changes is the treatment *and* the prevention. This is the mission of the Ideal Weight Program (IWP).

The IWP is a lifestyle change program. As with any endeavor, its comprehensiveness stands on the shoulders of the marriage of TCM and FM.

I strongly believe that understanding physiology, and therefore, pathophysiology is crucial to ethically and effectively treating metabolic dysfunction. My patients rely on me to understand their imbalance, treat and educate them on how to regain their health.

The IWP addresses diseases of lifestyle and obesity through gentle detoxification, nutrition/metabolic pH balanced diet, exercise, stress management and restoring sleep. Key to the program is the application of a series of microcurrent frequencies to fatty areas of the body. This has the effect of moving stagnated Fluids (structure), and tonifying deficient *qi* (function). It also can have profound psycho-emotional effects.

This microcurrent treatment strategy, along with lifestyle changes of diet and exercise very assertively and effectively aids in the repair of the Middle Burner, strengthens Liver/Kidney/Spleen *Qi* and calms the *Shen*.

Through FM we know the physiology of the digestive system and the pathology of leaky gut and triggered immune responses. Did you know that more serotonin is produced in the gut than in the brain?

As we concentrate my study of Middle Burner physiology through the dual lens of FM and TCM, we continue to develop and refine microcurrent treatment strategies to address the myriad of pathology expression. Microcurrent is such a powerful treatment tool. I lovingly refer to microcurrent as "acupuncture on steroids."

The Ideal Weight Program has produced more than weight loss in clients. Clients have reported improvements in the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome, leaky gut syndrome, diabetes, depression, fatigue and much more.

## Conclusion

The combination of acupuncture with microcurrent has totally transformed our clinical practices. They are synergistic in as much as acupuncture opens the portals of the body's meridians inviting microcurrent to supplement cellular energy. Energy medicine can greatly enhance the effectiveness of nutrition, detoxification, medicinal herbs and other internal medical treatments.

SEPTEMBER 2012