



GENERAL ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture Today in China: Part III

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Beijing, China - With a growing economy and strong roots in traditional medicine, China has a lot to offer practitioners in the states, when it comes to self-improvement and learning.

On the recent trip to Beijing and Tianjin, I had the opportunity to see firsthand the outstanding work being done by some of the top TCM doctors in the country, including Dr. Shi Xue Min. As many in the states know, Dr. Shi Xue Min has been on the cutting edge of stroke rehabilitation treatments by introducing the world to his specialized trademark treatment XNKQ. In China, the highlight was being able to see the draw he has with Western patients who travel thousands of miles to seek relief from Dr. Shi and his many understudies.

During my stay, Dr. Shi was also celebrated for his 50 years in TCM by many people from all over the world. As with the great masters before him, his work was also lauded by the Chinese government and has been preserved for the generations to come through a government funded catalogue.

One of the things I appreciated most about the trip was that it served as a great eye-opener when it came to seeing the differences in care, education and communication in the Far East. Some of the biggest things I was able to take away included; learning how far China has come to preserving the traditions of the masters for TCM professionals to its shortcomings when it came to bridging the gap with the states.

Connecting the Dots



The first teaching hospital of Tianjin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine receives more than 2 million patients a year.

In China, many TCM educators agreed that during the past decade, TCM schools in the country have done a great job of opening their doors and establishing connections with U.S. based universities allowing a free flow of ideas, but there is still more to be done.

So far, there has been a good rapport between practitioners and officials in China with many U.S. universities and TCM programs. A lot of this starts with giving U.S. practitioners the opportunity to travel to China to gain knowledge firsthand.

China has the ability to give practitioners not only an inside look at the history of TCM, but also give a glimpse into the latest innovations that will eventually make their way into the states. Much of this effort was seen in China, with schools and institutions such as the First Teaching Hospital of Tianjin.

The hospital has made it easier for Westerners to receive an in-depth clinical education that entails treating hundreds of patients a day with a wide range of ailments. However, although both academic and medical institutions have opened their doors, there still remains the issue of language and cultural barriers. Many practitioners studying abroad are faced not only with educational challenges but also living conditions and cultural issues that often can make for an unpleasant and frustrating experience.

The same issue of language and culture affected Western patients being treated at the Chinese hospitals. This is one issue many in China have been trying to address in recent years by having more English translators available.



Ashley Boyes of Arizona in treatment for stroke rehabilitation in the first teaching hospital in Tianjin, China.

In observing the educational system of TCM in China, it was impressive to see the many options that students had from the various treatments and herbal concoctions that are not available in the United States. With a lot more freedom to explore herbs and use treatments that go beyond the typical acupuncture treatments it often seemed that more innovative treatments were happening abroad, however with less regulation and more government support these treatments in China made sense.

Students in China also have the benefit of a subsidized education and more job opportunities abroad due to the demand for TCM treatments and the support of the Chinese government.

The great thing about many of the TCM schools abroad was seeing their eagerness to help TCM schools in the United States improve and establish a solid connection with Chinese institutions. Today, there is an effort to translate many classic books and important research coming out of China and there is also a push to have many students studying abroad have the opportunity to get a hands-on opportunity to do a number of clinical trials to try and document to take back to their practice and/or school.

In Beijing, there are also many programs being taught in English that make it easier to bridge the gap between the Far East and the United States. Many Chinese high ranking TCM professionals such as Dr. Shi also expressed their enthusiasm in teaching in the United States and further developing a strong relationship with both schools and professionals that they believe will ultimately make TCM more accepted and accessible to the masses in the states as it is in China.

Working Together

One of the most impressive facts I learned in China was about the healthcare spending. While abroad, Bloomberg News reported healthcare spending in the country is expected to almost triple up to \$1 trillion annually by 2020 driven primarily by an aging population.



For decades, many TCM schools in China have helped Western students learn new techniques abroad to treat their patients.

Ninety-five percent of China's 1.3 billion people are covered by some form of health insurance, which makes TCM a lot easier to access since it is part of the overall healthcare system. This gives many TCM students ready to graduate something to look forward to. This is far different from the realities of many TCM students in the United States, where student loans are high and TCM is still establishing itself in mainstream medicine.

However, although China proved to be rich with TCM resources, it also proved to be a place that is still in the midst of improving its healthcare in many ways. There is still a lot to be done to improve healthcare abroad to be able to compare it equally to the care in the United States.

Although China is birthplace of TCM, the trip made it clear the United States and U.S. based practitioners really hold the key to the future of TCM. The U.S. TCM world still has room to grow, but it is the place that can see the real growth of TCM in areas of technology, research and through its alliances with schools abroad.

Overall, the trip to China was the best way to get to know TCM in a in-depth way - through its core roots. China has the remarkable ability to give practitioners a glimpse into a fascinating history while also providing a look at very innovative research that will ultimately affect the practice in the United States in the near future. That is something everyone can look forward to.

"It truly is shocking that back home the medical community doesn't seem to accept this treatment - either they are skeptical or have no opinion," said House, Boyes' mother. "This treatment should be on the rise, this could be the future."

<iframe width="560" height="315" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/3fNf2PJCaqk?rel=0
frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>

Editor's Note: This is the final part of our AT in China series. To read [Part I](#) & [Part II](#), please visit www.acupuncturetoday.com. For questions or comments, email me at bduran@mpamedia.com.

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