

# Clearing Blocks: A Way to Improve Cosmetic Acupuncture

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As a Five Element acupuncturist who teaches facial acupuncture classes nationally, I was surprised to learn that one of the basic principles I was taught in school is unfamiliar to most acupuncturists.

Rooted in *Five Element Theory*, the practice of clearing energetic blocks before initiating treatment is at the core of my facial acupuncture classes. A block is defined as, "A break in, or impediment to, the smooth flow of Qi."<sup>1</sup> Blocks can prevent treatments from being effective or holding. They must be cleared in order for healing to take place. Behind any facial acupuncture treatment, whether it is for cosmetic or functional (neuromuscular) purposes, is the principle of directing energy up to the face.

## Interrupted Flow

If a person's energy cannot flow smoothly in the intended direction, either to specific acupuncture points, or to muscles, the treatment will not be as effective. The Miraculous Pivot (Ling Shu)<sup>2</sup> teaches us, "Only when the stagnation is cleared away can the channels be vented and Yin and Yang be harmonized."

Blocks to treatment can take many forms. They can be energetic such as: Possession, Aggressive Energy, Husband/Wife or Entry/Exit. They can be lifestyle blocks such as: diet, relationships, and substance abuse. Some blocks are structural like a scar or bone structure. Others blocks to treatment relate to a patients' dependence on the illness for sympathy, or financial reasons.

## Energetic Blocks

For the purpose of this article I will discuss only energetic blocks, and the diagnosis and treatment of two types in detail. Energetic blocks are diagnosed in various ways. Some can show up on the pulses as a disparity in the strength of one pulse in relation to another or in the strength of the left side pulses to the right. Other ways blocks can show up are in a patient's affect, physical or emotional well-being, or appearance, our ability to connect with them or even in their history.

## Prioritizing Blocks

Blocks vary in severity and significance. Some are dire and require immediate attention; some are less severe and will resurface from time to time. The list of energetic blocks presented in order of treatment priority is:

- Possession: Internal Dragons (IDs) and External Dragons (EDs)
- Aggressive Energy (AE)
- Husband/Wife Imbalance
- Entry/Exit (E/E) including CV/GV

One-sided symptoms include:

- Umbilical Pulse
- Akabane Imbalance

The first block to be cleared is always possession. Although the word "possession" may bring up superstitious or biblical notions, clearing possession is one of the oldest forms of healing. According to Five Element principles, possession is when a person is no longer in control of his whole self. The hallmark sign of possession is a lack of shen in the eyes of the patient. Some supporting signs may be:

- Patient may exhibit or speak of a lack of control over aspects of their body, mind or spirit.
- Practitioner may be unable to communicate directly with the patient, or feel uncomfortable in their presence.
- If you cannot look directly into their eyes or are not connecting with them.
- Patient may have a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse.

External Dragons are specifically noted when a patient has the above symptoms and has experienced extreme weather or climates or an external trauma such as an accident.

The treatment for IDs are as follows:

- Master Point .25 cun below Ren 15
- ST25
- ST32
- ST41
- Right to left, top to bottom
- Straight in
- No needle action
- Leave in 15 minutes, take out top to bottom, right to left.

For EDs:

- GV20
- BL11
- BL23
- BL61
- Right to left, top to bottom
- Straight in
- No needle action
- Leave in 15 minutes, take out top to bottom, right to left

If a patient is possessed, clearing subsequent blocks can be impossible. If it is suspected, it should be addressed before any other treatments are performed. To learn more about the conditions which can lead to possession, or diagnosis I recommend, *"The Clinical Practice of Chinese Medicine"* by Lonny S. Jarrett or *"Five Element Constitutional Acupuncture"* by Angela and John Hicks and Peter Mole.

Once possession is cleared, the next block to address is Aggressive Energy. Aggressive Energy (AE) is created by toxic or polluted energy that moves along the K'O cycle. According to Five Element theory, Aggressive Energy is: "Qi which is contaminated and polluted and whose quality is poisonous and destructive." AE will cause problems within the total energy of the body, mind and spirit (Worsley, 1990).

AE must be cleared to prevent its spread to other officials during treatment, hence its clinical

significance in Facial Acupuncture. AE can occur after surgery, emotional or physical illness or a variety of other conditions. It is drained through the Yin organs via the Back Shu points. The test for AE is also the treatment; there is no other way to diagnose with certainty that a patient has AE. Therefore, AE should be cleared on every new patient.

Needles are placed very shallowly, in the Back Shu points (BL13, 14, 15, 18, 20, 23) test needles are placed in each of the three Jiao, either inside or outside the inner bladder line. If the needles are placed properly they should hang down slightly, but not touch the skin.

If the redness around the needles is different than the test needle, then AE is present and must be drained. The needles must be left in until the redness clears. AE can recur, you can retest any time you suspect it is present. If other more severe blocks (such as IDs) are present, AE will not clear until the other blocks have been cleared.

A husband/wife imbalance and an entry/exit block are two more examples of energetic blocks, which can impede the smooth flow of energy to the face during treatment. They are diagnosed on the pulses. Regardless of the nature and severity of the block, its presence will impede the effectiveness of any acupuncture treatment. Without this crucial piece, treatments can progress more slowly and not have as long lasting effect.

### *References*

1. Smith SM. "The Five Element Acupuncture Handbook." *S.M. Smith*, 1998.
2. Bin W. "Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic." *Shanghai Ancient Text Publishing House*, 1991.

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