



TECHNIQUE CORNER

The Simplest Diode Therapy

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Some of you contacted me after my May column, "On the Road with Asian Bodywork Therapy," referenced simple diode therapy. I decided there was enough general interest from close colleagues and AT readers to warrant a close-up!

A Little History

The diode therapy I described is a much simpler version than the better-known "diode ring" strategy famed by Massachusetts acupuncturist Kiiko Matsumoto, LAc. Practitioners who use magnets or ear seeding may enjoy experimenting with diodes to see which method is most effective for which problem and on which specific points.

Tetsuro Saito, founder of the Shiatsu Center in Toronto, Ontario (Canada), introduced a group of us to diode therapy a couple of decades ago. Before training in *shiatsu*, Tet worked as an electrical engineer, little imagining his two worlds would float together so simply in future years.

He told us, "Actually, diode therapy was developed by Dr. Manaka in Japan." Yoshio Manaka was a renowned 20th century physician and acupuncturist in Tokyo, revered for his innovations and combination of non-invasive techniques to enhance the body's ion flow. Several Japanese medical professionals, including Tet Saito, experimented with Dr. Manaka's diode therapy for pain control, to ensure it was safe and effective, before sharing the techniques with students and colleagues.

Applications

The secret? As diodes move electricity in every electronic item we own, the tiny silicon bead center is equally capable of directing the flow of *qi* – and unscrambling blocked *qi* in the body!

We used to buy the simplest form of silicon (or germanium) diodes in packs of 100 (like a strip of lollipops) for just a few dollars from Radio Shack before it closed. Today, you can order them online. The simplest diode is about 5 mm long and 2 mm in diameter; cylindrical in shape. The

silicon bead in the middle has a black line you point toward the heart when you tape the diode on an *ashi* point or specific acupoint.

Tet Saito advised us to use silicone diodes for fast relief, and germanium diodes for slower, but more long-lasting relief. Personally, I have always found silicon diodes to be the most effective.

How to Use



Before applying diodes, curl the thin wires on either side of the silicon bead into tiny spirals to be able to tape safely and comfortably on an acupoint or *ashi* point, ensuring the black line is pointing toward the heart. Use a sensitive tape for folks who are allergic to Band Aids. You can use a single diode on a central point, or diodes on different relevant points; symmetrical where possible.

Yes, you can combine different acupoints or *ashi* points; but don't overload. A colleague of mine in Berlin went overboard and taped about 100 on his own body as an experiment ... and couldn't understand why he suddenly experienced vertigo.

"Vertigo?" I responded when he told me. "I'm surprised local radio didn't channel through you!" I have never used more than six on one client at a time, but generally fewer.

When to Use

For general pain, select the appropriate acupoints, distal and/or proximal, after you have activated the meridian and other key points, via needling or acupressure. Those of us in Asian bodywork therapy who do not use needles have found diodes to be a wonderful way of teaching clients about the potency of different acupoints, and to be able to remember them between sessions. We show them how to prep the area carefully with subtle stretching and activation of the points using thumbs, fingertips or knuckles, depending on the form.

We advise clients to expose the diode to natural sunlight - or any kind of light - as often as possible. If the diodes are in a hidden area (say, on the sacrum to help ease sciatic pain), we suggest they expose the area to light during potty breaks. I had to discourage one of my clients from dropping his pants in the middle of Times Square!

Most effective uses? Tet Saito used diodes frequently to ease muscular pain and tension. Diodes on Sp 6, 9, Stomach 36, and Liver 2,3 are helpful for menstrual cramps, or as a preventive method a day or so before painful menstruation is due. Similarly, Sp 6 and Stomach 36 are also good ways of subduing a hot flash during menopause.

Constipation? Activate LI 4 vigorously, then apply a diode. (It's a tricky area and may fall off easily, so tape carefully after first expanding the area by applying pressure on the first finger and thumb simultaneously.)

Headaches? *San Jiao* 23, UB 10 and GB 20. If someone has long hair, be careful about taping UB 10. In fact, a bald-headed client is the best if you need to tape diodes around the occipital ridge or on *Du* 20! Be equally careful about taping diodes on the face or around the eyes.

As I mentioned in my May column, I found it effective to apply diodes to *San Jiao* 23 and SI 19 to help "Tobias," an MD client in Zurich tackle the constant ringing in his ears. Diodes, along with a combo of methods, helped to minimize the problem and in a way he could control for himself - clearly a key plus in this strategy.

I have also advised frequent fliers to tape a diode on P 6 for travel sickness or to calm nerves. A P 6 diode is an equally good way of easing chemo-induced nausea.

And yes I have taught kids about diodes - especially "Tommy," a 10-year-old boy who experienced allergy-related headaches in NYC. He thought the method was "so cool" - it made him feel like he was in Star Wars. It gave "Tommy" some measure of control over his headaches, and he told me he would track the diodes along the route of his headache at the first glimmer of pain. He was able to monitor results in a way that captured his imagination.

Even Shingles?

I encourage all my graduates to continue experimenting with diodes so we can explore and test new methods. One of my graduates in Montreal, family physician Lise Ste-Marie, MD, decided to encircle a client's shingles rash with diodes to help minimize searing pain. Being very careful to avoid the rash itself, Dr. Ste-Marie taped the diodes to follow one another in a circle, with the final diode's black line pointing toward the heart. The arrangement formed a complete circuit.

Can you use Multiple Times?

Yes, of course. I advise dipping them in cold water and sea salt between uses just to clear *qi*. It's also possible for clients to remove their diodes and reattach them after taking a shower.

DECEMBER 2022