

When the Student Is Ready, the Teacher Shall Appear

John Amaro, LAc, DC, Dipl. Ac.(NCCAOM), Dipl.Med.Ac.(IAMA)

Some time ago, a gentleman sought assistance in my office for severe facial pain which traumatically occurred months prior, when the snow-blade he was operating suddenly struck an immovable object, hurling him nose-first into the steering wheel. The discomfort in his cervical region was of secondary importance to the intractable pain this gentleman suffered in his nasal area, entire face and head.

He described the pain as "excruciating" and "unrelenting." The pain in his face and nose was so intense that he would be forced to sit still for hours at a time, ignoring his family and business. Nothing he attempted or had been prescribed offered even minimal relief. It got to the point that he even contemplated suicide.

He had been to two naso/maxilla specialists, a general practitioner and his regular chiropractor, all to no avail. There was no specific medical diagnosis as to the cause of his intense pain, other than the DC explained it as a pinched nerve at the C2-C3 level. He visited my office, desperate and seeking the possibility of acupuncture.

Listening to his case history and the explanation of his pain, I suddenly thought of a similar patient whom I had treated many years prior. I pulled my *teishein* (noninvasive tapping instrument) from my pocket (I could have just as easily pulled out my ballpoint pen), and stimulated one acupuncture point on the back of his left hand. The pain was relieved by 50 percent immediately, according to the patient's personal evaluation. He was elated. On the second visit (the following day) he reported to everyone in the reception room that he had no further pain and wasn't even really sure why he had returned for treatment. He felt great. In discussing the seemingly miraculous outcome with the patient, it was decided to leave well enough alone and only treat him if the symptoms returned. Even though he became a regular maintenance patient for years, I never again treated his facial pain.

So, what about the simple point on the back of the left hand and what does that have to do with the title of this article? Many years ago, I attended to a young lady who suffered a similar accident, except she was cleaning the bathtub when her hand slipped and she went face-first into the side of the tub. To this day, I have never seen another patient who had consulted with more doctors prior to seeing me. She had seen 23 doctors of all disciplines, including seven DCs.

Her nose and facial pain had been agonizing for four years, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. She complained of multiple paraesthesias and her teeth feeling like "mush" against her tongue. The last four medical doctors had referred her for psychiatric evaluation and counseling, obviously out of total frustration with the unexplained phenomena. The DCs she saw were some of the best, including experts in skull molding, endonasal technique, kinesiology and a variety of adjustive procedures from the atlas to the coccyx.

When she visited my office on the referral of a friend, I realized we had nothing to lose, and that even though she had tried "everything," she had not tried acupuncture.

Even though I was young in my practice, I had this incredible confidence, backed by little knowledge and clinical experience. Following 24 visits of acupuncture, manipulations of the cervical spine, hard and soft palates, sphenoid bone and pulling her uvula, I came to the hard fact that I, too, had failed her. I suggested a psychiatrist. Why is it whenever a patient fails to respond, the first thing we think of is a mental problem?

One evening I went looking for a newspaper article I had saved in a large box in the back of my closet. I started to extract stacks of papers, old photos, a slide rule, paper clips, etc. As I was slinging items onto the floor around me, a small, steno notebook appeared. I threw it over my shoulder; but the coiled wire, which had been stretched, struck me right between the eyes, scratching my forehead with the sharp edge of binding. The notebook landed in my lap, with a page staring up at me that said "for nasal pain - point #17." There also was a small, barely legible picture of a hand I had drawn, with the point illustrated. This was the notebook I used on my first visit to China in 1973 when I visited the Tai Chung Medical School in Taipei, where I was first presented with Chinese hand acupuncture.

Talk about something hitting you between the eyes! On her next visit, I stimulated that specific point on her hand. She was openly irritated because that was the only thing I offered to do for her that day. She felt more could and should have been done for her treatment, as I had in the past. Frankly, I really did not have anything else to offer her. As she walked through the reception room on her way out the door, she slumped into a dead faint in the middle of the floor. Upon reviving, she stated that she was emotionally and physically overwhelmed because her pain and paraesthesia were suddenly and instantly gone.

No, I cannot explain it, nor does it make any sense to my physiologic or just plain logical mind, but it happened. I shall never forget that point. As a result of that incident years ago, the gentleman with the facial injury - and perhaps hundreds of future patients worldwide - may benefit from this lesson, especially if you are just reading this by happenstance.

Where's the specific miracle point which affects facial and nasal pain? Two fingerbreadths distal to the dorsal wrist crease, in line with an imaginary line drawn down the middle of the index finger. The specific point is not the reason for this article - it is the concept behind it.

As we go through our daily routine, we are often presented in unusual ways with the answer to our patients' or our own problems. The teacher may be anyone, anywhere, anything, or take any form. You may be just driving down the street, see a billboard which may trigger a thought and act upon it. Don't be afraid to let intuition enter your thoughts or to act upon that intuition.

I think one of the most outrageous events I have personally experienced to fully illustrate this point is the time I was quite agitated over a particular patient's lack of response for which I did not know where to turn. She had exhausted every medical, CAM and other remedy for her lingering serious, complicated case. She suffered multiple symptomatology and her case challenged specialists in every field.

One day while in my car, stopped at a stoplight, I was thinking of this case and what to do to help this unfortunate lady. While gazing out the window, waiting for the light to change, a car rolled past me and stopped for the light. The out-of-state license plate was TH5 P5. As the light changed and the car

accelerated out of view, I wondered, *Could these possibly be the two key component acupuncture points which may change the direction of this person's health?* After all, they are quite well-known individually, and especially in combination. I am very open-minded, but this event was beyond weird.

On the patient's next visit, I naturally used this combination of acupoints, which ultimately led to a completely successful outcome. The patient credits acupuncture for her stellar clinical response and I credit...? You may fill in the blank with whatever feels comfortable for you.

The moral of the story: "When the student is ready, the teacher shall appear." Always be ready to act on your intuition. Always listen to the teacher, wherever and whenever it may reveal itself.

JANUARY 2008