

GENERAL ACUPUNCTURE

The Source-Luo Point Combination, Part 3

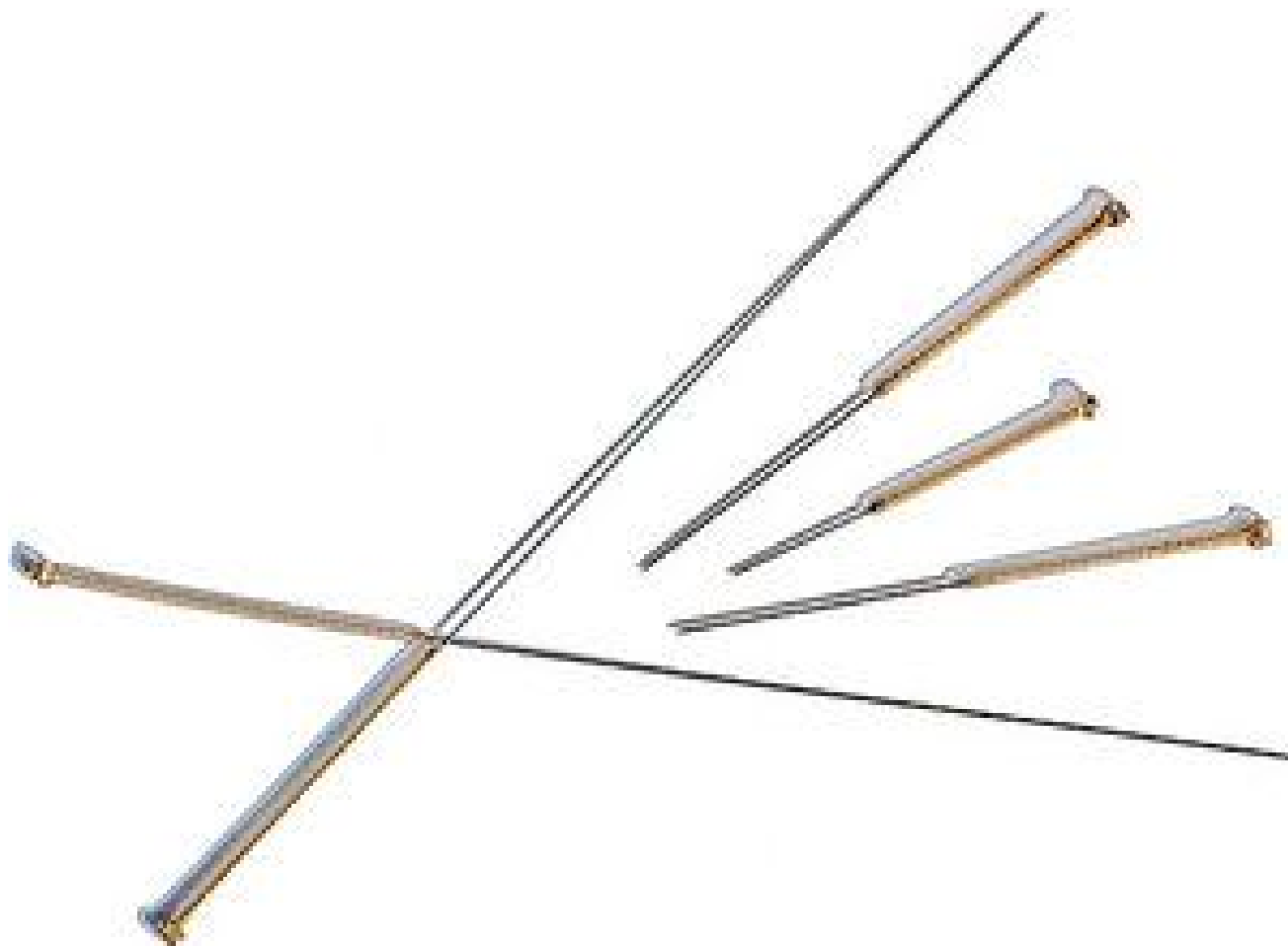
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Dr. Nguyen Nghi (NVN) was born in Vietnam and is one of the most important scholars, writers, teachers and practitioners of modern time. Many of his theories and applications are the source of modern teachers from Europe and the United States. NVN was an allopathic physician. He studied Chinese medicine after practicing western medicine and would dedicate his life to Chinese medicine.

Dr. Nguyen Nghi moved to France and eventually collaborated with French practitioners. A significant collaboration was with Dr. Albert Chamfrault, who carried on the tradition of Morant's teachings. Through this collaboration it appears NVN integrated some of the language Morant used into his explanation of Chinese medicine. NVN expands on Morant's theory of transverse luo collaterals and the transfer of *qi* by using the luo-source point combination. NVN promotes combining the source and the luo point to transfer *qi* between the channels. The transfer is through the transverse luo collateral. As mentioned early, there is no mention of transverse luo branches in any classic Chinese medical texts.

An area of contention (the contention arises when supporting Morant and NVN's theories) is some practitioners' interpretation of chapter 63 of the *Su Wen*, "Acupuncturing the Superficial Luo." NVN references chapter 63 to support the transfer theory. The chapter describes how pathogens in the luo mai can be transferred through the body. This chapter presents a special needling method, opposite side needling (*mui ci*) to treat certain conditions. The chapter describes how pathogens in the luo mai can transfer to the opposite side of the origin of the condition. Because of this transfer, contra-lateral needling is advised. In this specific case, when contra-lateral needling is applied the treatment is actually at the origin of the condition. Awareness of this transfer of pathogens through the body may have led NVN to expand the view that the source and luo can transfer *qi* and blood throughout the channel system. And according to NVN, it is the transverse luo mai that is the path that transfers the *qi* and blood. This view ignores the essential understanding of the luo mai: they are used to remove

pathogens from the body with the prick to bleed technique, and if the pathogen is not removed it can transfer to the main channels and the internal organs. It also ignores the guidance in the *Ling Shu* that to balance the main channels and internal organs, select points on the main channels. The *Ling Shu* offers a clear understanding of the functions and applications of the main channels and their points, and the luo collaterals and the luo points.



The "Acupuncture the Superficial Luo" chapter is used to support new ideas in the practice of acupuncture. Some modern teachers reference this chapter as the source of divergent channels theory, not the luo mai. There is one reference to "bie" in the chapter. Bie means diverts. The meaning is the same as branches. If you read this chapter, you will see many references to the luo mai (more than 20 luo references in the chapter) and only one for bie. One of the supporting arguments for this theory is the pathology listed in chapter 63 includes conditions in the big joints (articulations), and the big joints are where the divergent channels mostly originate, the luo mai do originate there or primarily flow there.

This theory ignores one main aspect of the luo mai: pathogens can transfer from the luo mai to the main channels and the internal organs. This chapter is explaining this type of transfer through the body. Chapter 63 states: "In general, when a pathogen invades the body, it first enters the skin level. If it lingers or is not expelled, it will travel into the micro luo. If it still is not expelled, it then travels to the regular luo channels. From here it proceeds to the main channels, connecting to the five zang organs, and finally to the intestines and stomach. At this stage, everything may be affected."

This *Su Wen* passage describes the transfer of pathogens from the *luo mai* to the main channels, the internal organs and potentially everywhere in the body. It would be normal *luo* pathogens can move to all the joints, small and large, these are the pathways of the *luo mai* and the main channels. The first two sentences in chapter 63 include the following question: "I have heard of a technique that employs acupuncture the 'superficial *luo*.' It is clear this chapter is about the *luo mai*."

The transfer of *qi* and blood in the way NVN proposes is an entirely new idea to Chinese medicine. The theory references the *Da Cheng*, is altered by Morant and expanded further by NVN. NVN provides his own theory that is not found in any of the earlier Chinese medical classics to support his method. NVN differs from Morant in that he suggests to always apply the *luo*-source point combination. He says the transverse channel flows from the *luo* point to the source point. Morant suggests the transverse *luo* channel flows from the *luo* point to the *luo* point. Also, both Morant and NVN suggest the widest range of conditions can be treated in their methods: any condition of the paired main channels and organs. The creation of the transverse *luo* theory is an attempt to explain how the source-*luo* point combination functions.

NVN presents there are two collaterals within the *luo mai*. The first is the pathways found in the *Ling Shu*. He calls these the longitudinal *luo* collaterals. He also presents there are pathways from the *luo* point (which he calls a reunion point) to the paired *yin-yang* channel. These pathways are called the transverse *luo* collaterals. This explanation can be viewed as formulating a theory to support Morant's transfer of *qi* and blood theory. Eventually, the theory will be applied to the *Da Cheng*'s source and *luo* point combination; the transverse *luo mai* will flow from those two points. And the transfer of *qi* and blood is between those two points by way of the transverse *luo* pathway. This theory is used to support NVN's source and *luo* point treatment.

The classics present the *luo mai* are at the superficial layer of the body and are treated with the prick to bleed method to release the pathogen(s). If they are not released they can transfer to the main channels and the internal organs. The *Ling Shu* meticulously describes the function and symptoms of the main channels, and distinguishes them from *luo mai*. The classic also recommends treatment plans that balance the main channels and the internal organs. These treatment strategies include using the main channels, not the *luo mai*. Understanding the function and application of the entire acupuncture channel system is essential for developing effective acupuncture treatments. Morant and his followers, and NVN invented the transverse *luo* name, theory, application, and promoted it throughout Europe. As the teachers of this theory traveled and taught, these teachings spread throughout the world. This is a modern theory not presented in any Chinese medical classic.

A unique insight of the ancient healers is there are six acupuncture channel systems. Each system has a function that can better treat specific conditions better than another channel system. This understanding is part of the profound systems of correspondences, which is the basis of Chinese medicine. When we do not use all the channel systems, practitioners tend to try to use a channel system to treat conditions it does not most effectively treat. In my opinion, the usage of the *luo* point in source-*luo* point combination falls in that category. The *Su Wen* and *Ling Shu* advise caution about wrong treatment, which includes transferring pathogenic factors deeper in the body. The source-*luo* point combination can cause this incorrect treatment.

When viewing the entire channel system, it is clear the ancient practitioners were conveying a highly detailed understanding of the human body (including the channel system) and effective ways to treat illness. The purpose of this article is to stimulate an exploration of the Han dynasty classical method of

the Luo Mai by comparing it to a modern theory and clinical application. As practitioners of this ancient healing system, one part of our learning process is to understand the path left by the originators of this medicine. As we trace the steps of these profound healers we develop the knowledge to evaluate current theories and clinical applications. Studying the classics is an important aspect in that process.

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