

## **Qigong acupuncture** **Yuxia Qiu**

This article discusses *qigong* methods that enhance acupuncture practice. It is an original work based upon classical and contemporary Chinese literature that has been synthesized through clinical practice. Point location and needling techniques with *qigong* are both addressed. As a matter of definition, acupuncture is a technique that is used to regulate a human being's *qi* using needles. *Qigong* is a method of regulating a human being's *qi* through the discipline of physical, breathing and mental exercises. These two methods of patient care may be used in various combinations in order to improve outcomes through what is called "qigong acupuncture".

The earliest descriptions of 'qigong acupuncture' are found in the *Inner Classic* where *shen* and 'regulating mind' (*zhi shen*) are discussed. *Shen* is defined as both 'mind' and 'substances' depending on the context. For example, *shen* indicates mind in the statement, "[the practitioner] concentrates their *shen* in the heart to know the pathogenesis and prognosis" (Niu, 1996 -c). The notion of substance is reflected in the statement "shen is the essence of foods and drinks" (Niu, 1996 -b). Further, "the so called points are where *shen qi* travels, enters and exits the body" (Niu, 1996 -a). In the context of *qigong*, this *shen* is a substance suggesting 'internal *qi*' and 'external *qi*.' The *Inner Classic* also states that inferior doctors treat the physical body, while the superior doctors regulate *shen* as both the mind and *qi* (Niu, 1996 -a).

*Qigong* acupuncture has three clinical uses:

1. Precision point location through *qigong* methods.
2. To stimulate or regulate the *qi* of patient through needling techniques. This is commonly known as *de qi* or getting the *qi* sensation. Good *qi* sensation generates good effect, while no *qi* sensation means poor effect.
3. The acupuncturist who is also a good *qigong* practitioner regulates their *shen* and *qi*, and emits *qi* to the patient through the hands and needles, invigorating and regulating the patient's *qi*. This method is the narrowly defined 'qigong acupuncture.'

### **Qigong point location:**

Precise location of the points is essential to good outcomes. It affects the *qi* sensation and thereafter the therapeutic effect. Through what is called the 'qigong point locating method,' one can locate the point much more correctly.

Most acupuncture points have some common characteristics:

1. Location in the spaces. These are between the muscles, between tendons and in the depression around the joints.
2. Pressure on the point provides certain relief. When there is disorder of certain channel or organ, the sensitivity of the corresponding points will be higher.
3. It is important to note that the location of these sensitive points is not fixed. On the contrary, the location varies slightly with a person's body condition and disorder.

First, locate the approximate location of the point based on the description in acupuncture books and classics. For greater precision, the *qigong* point locating method can be used to locate the reactive point. Focus on the touch while pressing and moving around the point with the fingers, at the same time, emit *qi* to penetrate inside the skin or muscle (see next section, Getting the *Qi* Sensation.) When there is a certain change of the sensation on fingers, it is the right location of the point (Xu, 1989).

The sensations may vary depending on the case. There may be a feeling of a round ball, round ring, a hole with pulling force deep inside, or a resisting sensation. Often there is a sensation distinct from the surrounding tissue. When the sensations are felt, one can also determine whether the channel or organ is

depleted or excess. Resistance or hard sensations usually indicate excess while an empty feeling indicates depletion.

### Getting the *Qi* sensation

*Qi* sensation is critical for achieving good therapeutic effect in acupuncture treatment. Acupuncture analgesia and other therapeutic effect are dependant upon good *qi* sensation. Failure to get good *qi* sensation results from the following: (1) incorrect point location; (2) improper needle depth—either too deep or too shallow; (3) patient has a weak constitution; (4) the practitioner is not able to regulate the *shen* and *qi*.

Stimulation of the needle invigorates the *qi* of the point, which in turn invigorates the *qi* of the channels and organs. This regulates function and affects the whole body. The transformation of *qi* in the points is subtle. Regulate the *shen* before inserting the needle in order to catch and control the subtle transformations of *qi*. The *Inner Classic* stresses that the practitioners should “know how to cultivate their body” (Niu, 1996 -d). This requires practitioner self care through the *Dao* of health care and the practice *qigong* to regulate *shen*.

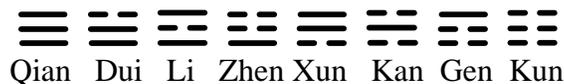
Prior to acupuncture, the practitioner must regulate the *shen*, transcend the environment in order to feel the internal *qi* movement of self and the patient. When control of the *qi* of self and the patient is achieved, acupuncture treatment can begin.

The change of *qi* will be visible and clearly noticed if the mind is highly concentrated on the *qi* without distractions from the outside world. It is as if staying solely in a remote quiet room with the door closed unaffected by other things. The *qi* sensation may be like the classical description of the 'fish biting the bait' or similar metaphors such as 'birds flying,' 'grass growing,' or 'ocean wave surging.' The best *qi* sensations are those of the *qi* being guided to the affected area through the use of points that are local, close to the affected area, or far from the affected area.

Through *qigong* the patient's *qi* can be regulated more effectively. Practitioners of acupuncture who practice *qigong* will have greater efficacy through regulating the *qi* at will. After getting the *qi* sensation, regulating, supplementing and draining methods can be applied to improve the effect. The outcomes are improved when the mind of the practitioner is engaged in addition to the technique.

### Qigong Acupuncture Techniques:

These are some commonly used *qigong* acupuncture techniques:



1. The *wu ji* method is as follows. After insertion, thrust the needle to the desired depth. Then keeping the fingers on the handle, concentrate on the needle as if holding a tiger,

and guide qi of the practitioner through needle to the patient's point to invigorate the qi of patient. Retain for 20 minutes. This method is an even method without supplementing or draining. It is suitable for disorders that are neither deficient nor excess. The aim is to improve homeostasis (Zhang, 1981).

2. The *tai chi* method is as follows. After insertion of the needle, keeping the fingers on the handle to feel the qi in the points, and following the qi's movement to spontaneously move the needle. This involves following the qi to move needle to different directions, or different depth to harmonize, supplement or drain the qi in the point and the body. Once the qi is balanced, withdraw the needle or retain the needles for another 20 minutes.
3. The *bagua* (eight fundamental) methods are as follows.
  - 3.1 The supplementing method involves sending the qi. After the patient feels the qi sensation, and the practitioner feels the qi inside the point, if loose, then thrust the needle deeper and guide qi down into the point.
  - 3.2 The draining method uses a drawing technique. After the patient feels the qi sensation, then the practitioner feels the qi inside the point. If it is tight, then lift the needle slightly and at the same time draw the qi up outside the point.
  - 3.3 The warming method: After the patient feels the qi sensation, press the points with left hand forcefully, with the right hand rotate the needle clockwise while pushing slightly 3-5 times continually, entwining the fibers of tissue until the needle is gripped firmly, thrusting forcefully and lifting gently 3-5 times continually, then rotate forward while pushing 3-5 times continually, then push the needle tip to maintain qi for several minutes, unwind the fibers of tissue and withdraw the needle slowly, close the hole quickly (Lu, 1995).
  - 3.4 The cooling method: After the patient feels the qi sensation, with the right hand rotate the needle counter-clockwise while lifting slightly 3-5 times continually, entwining the fibers of tissue until the needle is gripped firmly, thrusting gently and lifting forcefully 3-5 times continually, then rotate backward while lifting 3-5 times continually, then pull the needle tip to maintain qi for several minutes, unwind the fibers of tissue and withdraw the needle quickly without close the hole (Lu, 1995).
  - 3.5 The regulating method. After the patient feels the qi sensation, then the practitioner rotate the needle back and forth or move the needle up and down with light stimulation, and with intention. This will regulate and harmonize the qi.
  - 3.6 The dredging method refers to dredging the channels. After the patient feels the qi sensation, emit qi through the needle along the channel to the affected area. Assist by pressing the fingers above or below the point and emit qi through fingers inside the channel. This will free the qi flow of the channel.
  - 3.7 The scattering method. Once the patient feels distension that doesn't disperse and the needle feels tight, then press the thumb on the needle handle moving it lightly with intension. It is as if a bird has landed on the tree branches, which cause the branches to move. This move is performed with the intension of dispersing and spreading qi. This method is suitable for local qi and blood stagnation (Liu, 1982).
  - 3.8 The connecting method. After needling the single primary point, feel where the qi stops or palpate along the channel or around the point searching for where the qi stops. Then needle the second point and use either the supplementing, draining or regulating methods

*Qigong* acupressure can also be used instead of needles. Press the points while guide qi inside the point. The index or middle fingers are used with light pressure on the point. Qi is used during the pressure instead of strong force.

To be able to practice these *qigong* acupuncture techniques, a practitioner need to be able to control their mind through emptying and concentration. For all the methods under discussion, it is important for the practitioner to guide qi to the hand and fingers while performing the techniques.

## **In Closing**

Effective patient care is a complex endeavor. It is necessary to understand the patient's disease history, etiology, personality and environment. Psychological factors are also important, such as guiding the patient with language and other means to remove negative emotions so they can relax and enjoy the treatment. It is also important to encourage the patient to open to the treatment in order to enhance confidence in the safety and outcomes. The practitioner's language and mannerisms are essential for successful outcomes. A level of confidence is first acquired during the interview. The patient will continue to feel more comfortable as they develop the ability to communicate with the practitioner more freely. It is also important to encourage the patient to relax their body and empty the mind before insertion of the needles.

During acupuncture, the practitioner must closely observe the patient's *shen*. If the patient is calm and is relaxed with the treatment, a good *qi* sensation can be more easily achieved. Otherwise, if the patient has doubt, anxiety, or fear, then the *qi* sensation and the therapeutic effect will be diminished.

*Qigong* methods of point location and needling techniques will improve clinical outcomes. The *qi* moves and changes in terms of the points on the channels. Follow the *qi* to perform needling techniques and your success will improve!

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