

Dr. Frischman was interviewed for Wellspring Magazine's June 2019 article on acupuncture. What follows is the full questions and answers on which that interview was based. Enjoy reading all about acupuncture!

- What does it take to become an acupuncturist?

In the State of California, one is required to attend a certified four-year school of acupuncture and oriental medicine. To apply for admission one must have at least a bachelor of science degree or a bachelor of arts along with science prerequisites. After 4 years of rigorous academic and clinical training one is able to sit for the graduation exam and once one passes that, one can sit for the state board license. After passing this exam, one receives a masters in acupuncture and oriental medicine. These standards were established about 20 years ago. In addition, a select number of acupuncturists choose to study further - a minimum of another two years - for a doctorate degree - Doctor of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

- Why did you decided to learn acupuncture?

My late wife had been suffering from a seizure disorder that was non-responsive to any western medical treatment/medicine for many years and we had gone to several hundred practitioners and doctors around the world. No one could help. My business was suffering and I lost my home. I had to face up to the message Hashem was sending. It was time to close my business and go to medical school. I chose Chinese medical school and craniosacral coursework from the Upledger Institute as they seemed to provide the most hope for diagnosing and treating my wife's terrible suffering.

- How many years are you practicing? 19
- Where is your practice located?

Jerusalem, but I teach and treat in the US when I go back, and I maintain my license in order to be able to do that.

- Do you recommend acupuncture only for individuals who have a medical issue, or as maintenance for healthy people, as well?

Acupuncture is a valuable tool as part of a well-balanced regimen to promote health, wellbeing, and longevity. It is also effective in treating pain syndromes, both chronic and acute, by releasing the body's own pain relievers - endorphins - and treating emotional disorders by releasing serotonin.

- How do you find the area to puncture? Is there a feeling, such as a pulse, that you pick up on?

In Chinese medical theory, there are 14 main pathways, called channels (aka meridians), that traverse the entire circulatory and lymphatic and fascial systems of the body. Head to toe. There are specific points along these channels that address specific organic and global issues. On these channels are specific anatomical points that have empirically been shown to address specific physical and emotional issues. A trained physician or practitioner is able to feel differences in

pulse and body temperature at these points. (I believe this is the pulse you are referring to in your question.). This system of channels has been validated by Western medical science and more and more Western MDs are now taking courses in the use and certification of Chinese acupuncture. However, the course of study I took to complete my DAOM was over 4000 hours, whereas Western MDs get certification based on more like 400 hours of study.

- What is the maximum number of needles that can be used on a person?

There are many different approaches and styles of acupuncture. Generally it depends on whether a patient is in a state of excess or depletion. When a patient is depleted, very few if any are used. The use of fewer needles indicates a greater proficiency and expertise. With that said, there really is no limit. Remember that acupuncture, because it moves and unblocks pathways in the body, can also drain and deplete.

- Is there any medical condition that is unable to be helped with acupuncture that you are aware of?

Conditions of severe depletion require nourishing from food and Chinese and other medicinal substances and formulas before acupuncture itself can be used. Then there are some iatrogenic conditions, caused by Western medicine, where the body has been irreparably damaged by pharmaceuticals and treatments.

- Let's talk about qi. I'm a little confused about this "energy." In the Chinese view, is qi more of spiritual-type of energy or a physical force, such as electricity?

Everything in this this world has a spiritual component to it, including electricity and gravity. Chi has been characterized as "energy" or "vital force," but it is much more than that. It is an indefinable term used in Chinese medical literature to connote, I'd say, what we speak of in Jewish tradition as that spark of life and connectivity that we receive from Hashem and which drives our various levels of being and that leaves us when we pass away. Our state of health is relative to the degree of our chi's cultivation and its unimpeded flow. Internally, we cultivate our chi through nourishing ourselves physically as well as non-physically. This is consistent with the spirit of the Torah. As the author of the Tanya says, in Iggeres HaKodesh 31, "...Illness and health depend on the quality and circulation of the vitality flowing from the heart and enveloping all of the organs.... and if the circulation of the spirit of life (ruach hachaim) is as it should be, then a person is healthy...." In classic Chinese literature, we are told, "Chi is the commander of blood and blood is the mother of chi." Chi is indeed the life-force that moves and energizes the blood and which reciprocally receives its nourishment from the blood. As blood traverses the vessels, so to chi traverses the channels. When our circulation is impeded, our chi is stagnated."

The short answer is: It is both.

- Do we have to worry that there is any type of *avodah zara* or *kishuf* involved in acupuncture? Does it make a difference if the procedure is performed by a *frumme* Yid or a non-Jew?

Acupuncture is nothing more than a tool. There is no issue of avodah Zarah. No more than the use of a hammer or screwdriver or computer. When used prudently, it can build and increase kiddush Hashem (G-dliness) in the world, and when used wrongly, it can do harm. One should always be careful with any medical issue that we recognize that illness is a message from Hashem and not a mechanical process. When we relate to our bodies and the world mechanically, then we miss out on a tremendous opportunity to hear the messages Hashem has given us. As such, we should always look for a G-d fearing person to help us address our medical needs. (from YKF: remember that Rav Eliyashiv was helped by a goyish but G-d-fearing doctor).

- Is there any time that you would not recommend acupuncture to a person?
As said above, only a person who is severely depleted and is not supplementing their bodies biochemically.

- Do you have any nice stories of healing that you can share?

Let me first preface this answer by telling you that I never just use acupuncture unless a patient specifically asks me to do so. Acupuncture is a valuable tool that addresses dysfunctionality and imbalances bioelectrically and to a small degree bio-mechanically. Unless the biomechanical and bio-chemical aspects of a person as well as their emotions, thoughts, and ruchniyus are addressed, any “healing” or “fix” will only be temporary.

Three quick stories:

A family member came to me before they were to have knee surgery. He was in excruciating pain and could barely walk. By carefully analyzing and reviewing the balance of his body, I noted that the leg with the knee pain was an inch longer than the other leg. I knew that this was caused by the gluteal muscles on the short (non-painful) side being spasmed. I placed a needle deep inside the gluteal muscle. The patient felt what he described as electricity going down his leg, and when I removed the needle, he was able to walk without pain. No surgery.

My beloved wife, Yocheved, was at the dentist having a procedure and the dentist was unable to stop the bleeding from her tooth. I asked him if he was concerned or would like my help. He said, “No, everything is fine. Thank you.” After 5 minutes without any change, I placed a small needle in the inside of the big toe, at the corner of the nail, and - voila! - the bleeding stopped immediately.

A patient came to me with excruciating neck pain on the right side, unable to rotate his neck from side to side. Within 30 seconds of placing two needles, one halfway between the knee and the ankle on the outside of the left leg and two needles on various points of the inside of the hand, full rotation was restored and he was completely out of pain. Long term.

This is the power of acupuncture. Recognizing the magnificent connectivity that Hashem has placed in our bodies and how when we understand and appreciate how things work, we are able to be agents of healing.