



By Jo-Anne Flack

A few months ago, a leading London-based acupuncturist was interviewed in a national newspaper where he made a distinction between Five Element acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) acupuncture, even claiming that TCM acupuncture was not as effective.

This distinction is probably unhelpful, and not necessarily an accurate picture of how acupuncture has developed over many hundreds of years and how it works.

ICNM advisor and acupuncturist Alan Tinnion, who is a doctor in Traditional Chinese Medicine, is quite clear that the main focus for any acupuncturist must be the safe and effective treatment of the patient. More important than academic questions about systems, for acupuncture, acupressure, or related arts and disciplines of Traditional Chinese medicine, a thorough diagnosis of the patient must come first.

In the first of a series that will focus on one complementary medicine or therapy in each issue, the ICNM Journal takes a look at acupuncture. There has been much in the press recently about the efficacy of acupuncture and here we provide a range of ideas and views on the subject.

"My diagnostic approach is treating the body in its entirety, not merely the specific medical problem. For instance, one may prescribe a course of acupuncture, acupressure (Tui Na), to diminish localised back pain. This can relieve the pain and even cure the problem, but if the underlying causative factors (bad posture etc) are not correctly identified, the problem may return or manifest in some other form: TCM is based on the premise that prevention is better than cure. In the Far East, courses of acupuncture of Tui Na are often sought by the healthy, ahead of, for example the changing of the seasons (when pathogenic factors have the opportunity to invade the body and cause illness) to maintain a health-preserving balance within the body.

"To prevent or diminish the risk of the problems treated by acupuncture or acupressure recurring, I often prescribe courses of specific health-condition related traditional medical qi-gong. This helps the patient not only ward off a return of the condition but also fortifies overall health. I provide my patients with a thorough explanation of fundamental TCM concepts – definitions of intrinsic energy (qi), related energy path/meridian system of the human body, and the dynamics of Chinese medicine classical Five Element Theory. Most important, I detail the fundamental classical Chinese medicine concept of restoring or

maintaining balance between the negative and positive energies (what the Chinese call Yin Yang within the body).

Mr Tinnion's perspective reflects the traditional Far Eastern context and depth of his training and many years of clinical practise in China and the UK. He qualified at Advanced Level as a Doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine at Shanghai University and then worked at the Shanghai No 1 Peoples Hospital. He is also a Professor of traditional Chinese Internal and External martial and therapeutic arts and Master of Qi-Gong and Tai-Ji. He currently practises in the East Dorset and West Hants area, including GP surgeries. (www.qi-china.com)

TCM WILL GROW

He believes the use and acceptance of acupuncture and other aspects of TCM within this country will grow, particularly within the NHS. Mr Tinnion is currently working at Bournemouth Hospital, training senior nurses in specialist forms of medical qi-gong and his teaching organisation Qi China International also works with the national mental health charity, Mind.