

Traditional Oriental Medicine includes acupuncture, herbal medicine, diet and exercises, including tai ji quan [tai chi chuan] and qi gong [chi kung]. It is based, in part, on a Taoist world view, that things ebb and flow, and that human beings do best when in harmony with nature and with the society around them. We also do best when in harmony within ourselves.

We are most in harmony within ourselves when our internal energy, or Qi, flows smoothly. The word Qi also means breath, which is why breathing practices, such as Qi Gong, are so healthy.

Pain is considered a blockage of the flow of Qi and Blood within the body. Acupuncture treatment attempts to restore this flow, thus relieving symptoms. This also works on the emotional level, because often strong emotions are the result of, or can cause the blockage, or stagnation, of the flow of Qi.

Now modern research is attempting to understand how acupuncture and herbs, and exercises like tai ji and qi gong, promote health. This research includes brain imaging which validates the use of certain points for specific conditions. It also includes hundreds of clinical studies of the effectiveness of acupuncture and herbs in the treatment of disease.

For example, many studies document acupuncture's effectiveness in pain treatment. Others have shown that herbal medicine can be useful in treating maladies such as irritable bowel and other digestive complaints. In addition, more recent research has shown that Chinese herbs, along with supplements, when used with conventional cancer treatments, leads to improved survival.

Studies on tai ji quan have shown it to be a moderate cardiovascular exercise, useful in improving balance, and even in helping patients with Parkinson's disease improve their ability to initiate movement.

Qi gong has been studied in terms of lowering blood pressure, stress reduction, and as an adjunctive therapy for cancer and other chronic conditions.

Chinese dietetics teaches a practical, common-sense approach to eating, which is based on a varied diet in tune with the seasons of the year. It considers foods, like herbs, to have their own natures and functions which can promote health and well being.

Assessment and diagnosis according to Traditional Medical principles are a part of the treatment experience. Listening carefully to a patient's symptoms, taking the pulse, inspecting the tongue, palpating the abdomen and other areas of the body all give information which allows the acupuncturist to determine the treatment which will benefit the patient.

Acupuncture involves the insertion of very fine, sterile stainless steel needles into various locations on the body called acupuncture points. These are the hundreds of particular sites known to have predictable effects on the body, mind and spirit. Sometimes a point can be at the site of pain, while other times a point far from the location of the pain can treat the pain.

