

Puncture by prescription

Acupuncturist points out remedy for aches, pains

By JIM GERSBACH
Of the Emerald

I felt nothing when the needle punctured the back of my hand. But as it dug deeper a sudden dull pain shot through my hand.

According to acupuncturist Malvin Finkelstein of the Eugene Center for Acupuncture and Acupressure, the needle could relieve constipation, headaches, toothaches and help my digestion, provided I wasn't already in tip-top shape.

One of four Eugene acupuncturists, Finkelstein became interested in non-Western healing after an acupuncturist successfully treated him for back pain.

Finkelstein and his wife came to Eugene two years ago because they heard that people here would be receptive to acupuncture.

"A lot of Eugeneans are real open to new ways of doing things," he says.

Acupuncture, however, isn't really new, Finkelstein points out. It has been practiced in China for at least 3,000 years. Needles originally were made of stone, jade or bamboo.

The Chinese say acupuncture unblocks *chi*, the life energy they believe courses through everyone's body.

Headaches, digestive problems and a host of other chronic ailments occur when germs or other external substances block the body's flow of *chi*, Finkelstein says.

Acupuncture restores the flow of *chi* when needles are inserted at specific points where *chi* is believed to flow close to the surface.

Depending on the ailment, two to 16 stainless steel needles are inserted at specific points on the patient's body. The needles are stuck from one-quarter to one-half inch under the skin and left in place from five to 20 minutes while the patient lies immobile.

Finkelstein estimates that 98 percent of his patients feel very little pain when the needles go in.

"It feels like a mosquito bite."

But if a client prefers not to have needles inserted, Finkelstein can press the acupuncture points by hand.

Besides needles and acupressure, Finkelstein uses moxibustion to restart the flow of *chi* and relieve pain. Long practiced by native healers in Asia, moxibustion involves burning the herb mugwort over acupuncture points.

Ground, sifted and aged, the mugwort looks and feels like shredded foam rubber. Finkelstein rolls the herb into small cones, places them on the acupuncture point and lights the cones with a stick of incense. The mugwort smolders, heating the skin and supposedly stimulating the flow of *chi*.

Most people begin to feel better almost immediately, although severe or chronic pain may begin to subside a few days after a session, Finkelstein says.

He estimates about three-quarters of his patients experience some relief. Acupuncture acts as an analgesic, dulling or easing pain rather than blocking it out altogether, Finkelstein explains.

But patients who believe in acupuncture's effectiveness often get over pain more quickly than skeptical patients, he admits.

Under current state law, Oregonians must be referred by a doctor before visiting an acupuncturist. But that may change.

One acupuncture bill before the Legislature would change the referral law, and a second bill would require insurance companies to pay for the services of licensed acupuncturists. They currently are required to pay only for treatments received from physicians.

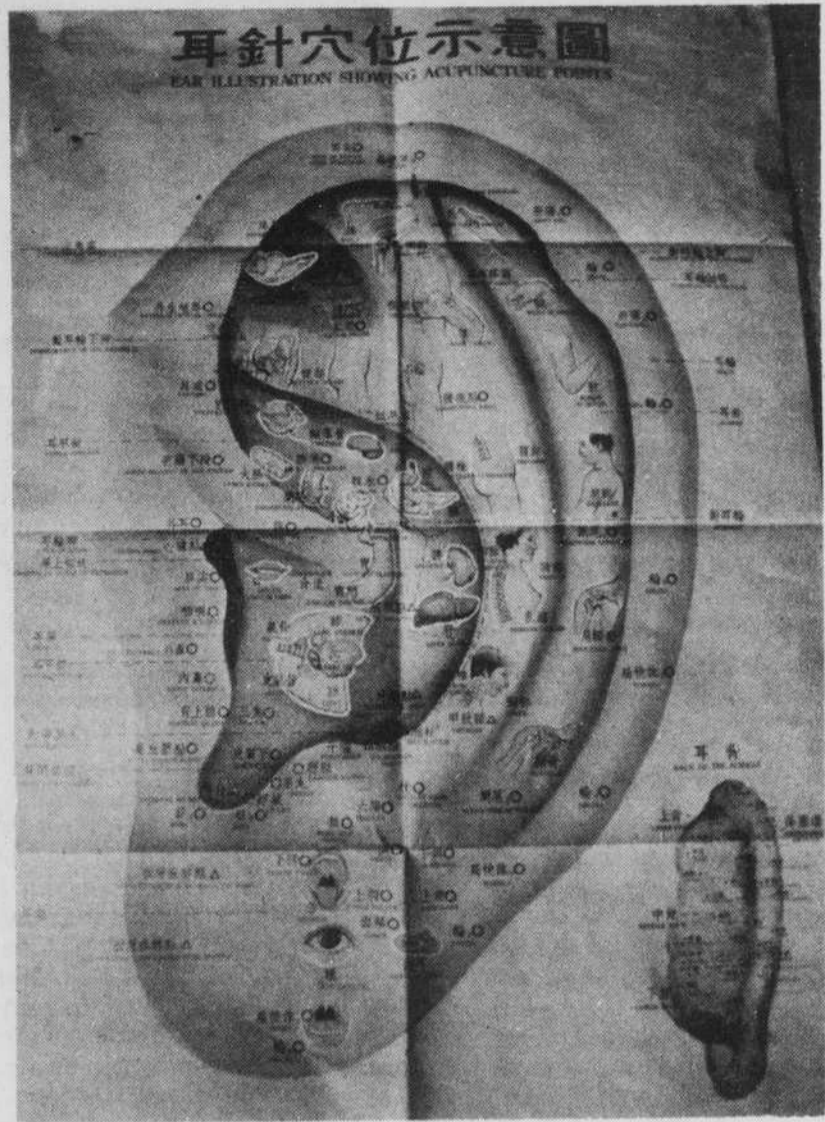


Photo by Steve Dykes

Chinese chart details the ear's acupuncture points.

Angry vets charge media with distortion

As the return of the American hostages filled TV screens, another special group of Americans experienced feelings different from the joy transmitted through the media.

Vietnam war veterans around the country have expressed anger and resentment at the contrast between the greeting given the former hostages and that given the veterans.

While many veterans are angry because they "never received comparable treatment," there also are many who feel that the government is hindering efforts to return the hostages to normal lives, says University veteran Dave Isenberg.

"They'll have three months and then they'll be dropped until the books and movies come out," Isenberg says.

"The government puts people on a cycle where they continue thinking of themselves as hostages."

Fellow veteran Ron Phillips says the press is attempting to create new myths out of both the hostages and Vietnam Veterans.

"They want, for some reason,

to bring back the myth of the white knight," he says.

Phillips believes media manipulation was responsible for the election of Ronald Reagan. Now is he is afraid the media may attempt to change the image of the Vietnam war to prepare the American public for a resurgence of militarism.

"They're going to remold the image of the Vietnam veteran into a hero. That scares me," he says. "They want to get these young boys to die in El Salvador."

For the past few years, the media have burdened the Vietnam vet with a "junkie image," but that will change as it won't be of any use in encouraging a new generation to go off to war, he says.

"People go to war because they want to be heroes," Phillips says.

He says that after the American policy of "search and destroy" in Vietnam, it is "insane" to say the hostages were brutalized.

"They should go to state hospitals. That's 100 times as brutal," Phillips says.

The former Marine experienced three years of treatment

for delayed stress following his return from Vietnam.

Isenberg describes some of the reaction to the returned hostages as "selective patriotism." Some of it may be

derived from feelings of frustration and guilt over Vietnam, he suggests.

"It's an effort to assuage guilt over what they should have done and didn't do," he says.

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