

## Koshi Balancing

I was asked some years ago to write about Chinese medical post-graduate education in the US. I have been a practitioner for 20 years now and have tried all along to keep informed about our profession. One of the topics I covered in the article was the emergence of study groups. I consider these groups, in which our senior home-grown North American practitioners take on the responsibility to pass on what they have learned, to be an important development. Chinese medicine has been practiced here long enough that we have our own elders. For me the most important learning—what I really depend on to sail my clinical ship, so to speak—has come entirely outside of the schools in this sort of setting.

A number of acupuncture teachers have agreed to take me under their wings, to work as my mentors: Peter Thompson, Jeffrey, Dann, Iwashina Anryu (aka Dr. Bear). My gratitude to them all is deep. With Peter and Jeffrey, it is not just acupuncture but bodywork as well. Of the three I have had the most time with Jeffrey. Peter is far away on the East Coast and does not gladly travel. Dr. Bear comes only once a year at best to Portland. My seminar-hosting company has brought Jeffrey to Portland many times to teach his Koshi-Balancing system of acupuncture (more on that in a bit), so I have had ample opportunity to listen to him establish the rationale for his system and to see it in action. In addition, I have had the chance to hang out with him at his clinic in Boulder and see patients together. I have had this clinical opportunity with Dr. Bear on two occasions as well. Seeing the principles of a style in action with actual patients is where the real learning occurs.

In 2007 I joined a group Jeffrey organized with Stephen Brown, and we traveled to Japan to attend the Meridian Therapy Summer Institute. This was actually a part of my OCOM DAOM program. Jeffrey served as my official mentor, monitoring my DAOM learning objectives. It was a transformational trip for me in so many ways, and one of the most positive outcomes was a solid relationship with Jeffrey and his work. I had first seen his Koshi Balancing system some years before in Seattle.

At NUNM when we had an M.Ac. degree (acupuncture only, no herbs) I taught a two-term class in Koshi-Balancing. We called it Embodied Acupuncture I and II. In teaching these classes for 3-4 years I came to more deeply appreciate the brilliance and simplicity of what he had developed in his Koshi-Balancing method. Just last week I saw a new patient, an elderly patient in a lot of chronic pain, and decided to do a pure Koshi-Balancing treatment. At the end I was astonished (yet again) at how much improvement we had managed to gain—and yet no needle was more than 1-2mm in the body at any point in time. And this patient had had a lot of acupuncture in recent years, with limited results.

*Koshi*, although it has the literal meaning of “hip,” in Japanese body-mind linguistics is taken to mean “greater lumbar-pelvic center.” Any physical medicine problems will necessarily involve koshi to some extent, and getting positive change in this area improves most physical complaints to varying degrees. But it would be a misunderstanding to see this system as working exclusively on physical medicine complaints; the body and mind are one after all,

which is to say that entering through the physical we can impact psycho-emotional problems as well.

We speak in TCM of the pivoting function of the *shaoyang*, but in Koshi-Balancing we take this literally, as in pivoting motions in the torso and pelvis. When we walk down the street, it is impossible to get far if we do not pivot through our structure. This simple insight (the basic ones are always more challenging to notice) is taken as the launching point for a profound style. When we find left-right differences in the *shaoyang* zone (not exclusively though—we do look at some other acupuncture channels as well) up the body and then clear them with superficial needles or *teishin* or moxa, it is surprising how much change occurs. More than surprising, it is often astonishing. The needle technique Jeffrey uses is Dr. Shudo's super-rotational technique. Often patients who have tried much deeper sports acupuncture styles are surprised how much can be accomplished with such gentle and minimal needling. The *teishin* use is also interesting for those whose only *teishin* training has come in Meridian Therapy circles and its ephemerally light touch. Jeffrey uses the tool to actually engage the superficial fascial layer and reads the direction of ease in its pull, and then follows that direction. It is a sort of fascial unwinding through the *teishin* point of contact. It is amazingly effective.

In the *shaoyang* zone we often find that deeper structures emerge close to the surface, e.g., GB 27, 28, 34, 41, 40,20. This is one reason why the superficial needling and *teishin* therapy are so successful in generating surprising change. This surface treatment approach also serves to unite the deeper and superficial energetic structures.

I especially appreciate Jeffrey's inclusion of movement in his Koshi system. It is clear that his martial arts background played a major role in the development of this system. In addition to the superficial needles he uses a few well-chosen Sotai movements in the Koshi system. These Sotai movements have a way of integrating what has been freed up within the overall structure. At the end of a Koshi-Balancing acupuncture treatment one feels transformed in spirit and much lighter in the body—freer in one's movements.

The take-away for readers unfamiliar with the Koshi-Balancing system is to develop an eye and feel for what is going on in the pelvis and shoulder-neck complex and in the *shaoyang* channels. Often physical medicine complaints will be unraveled there. Don't assume deep needles are needed. Experiment with gentler approaches. I'll end with a salute and deep bows of gratitude to Jeffrey Dann and a call to others in the first generation of practitioners in the US to step up to the plate and take on the mantle of mentor. Our field needs you in this role.

Kind regards all around,

Bob Quinn