

Chapter (I)

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Acupuncture is one of the major therapeutic procedures of traditional Chinese medicine, along with the use of herbs, has been in use for thousands of years. The first evidence of acupuncture to relieve pain was recorded in China on tortoise shell in the stone age. At that time flint needles were used. Some people think, but with no evidence, that acupuncture was discovered as a result of hunting injuries when a huntsman was cured after a trifling wound (*Felix Mann, 1977*).

It had been standardized and was recorded in the yellow Emperor's Classic of internal medicine 24 centuries ago (*Vickers, 1974*).

It's practice was consistent with Yin-Yang theory, the fundamental Chinese philosophy of active and passive (Positive & Negative) principles of nature. Every entity was viewed as consisting of complimentary opposites existing as parts of a whole, and inseparable from its relationship to other entities. Health was believed to result from a harmonious relationship of forces within the body and between the individual and nature. The major organs of the body, some of which were yin (solid) and some were Yang (Hollow) were thought to be connected by 12 paired and 2 midline meridians or channels, which were named for the organs with which they were connected.

In a state of health, vital energy (Qi or Chi) and four other fundamental substances flowed along these channels and harmonized the activity of the organs. Diseases were believed to be associated with an

imbalance of forces. It was corrected by inserting needles at appropriate points along the meridians at sites determined by the complex patterns of disharmony that were diagnosed (*Kaptchuk, 1983*).

Acupuncture was first introduced to western medicine in a book published in London in the later part of the 17th century (*Quen, 1975*). It was used by a French physician in the early 19th century, and was condemned as reckless after an official investigation. There continued to be periodic references to its use in the medical literature, and a translation of a book on acupuncture published in France was available in the United States in 1825.

In 1892, William Osler, in the first edition of his principles and practice of medicine, recommended that ordinary bonnet needles could do! However, acupuncture attracted little attention in American medicine until the early of the 17th century (*Tollison, 1989*). Then, as a result of visits to China by Western Journalists & physicians, a wide spread lay as well as medical interest developed in the phenomenon based on observations of surgery beings performed under acupuncture anaesthesia (*Benson, 1996*). This was a new application of the method and often involved electrical stimulation of body tissues through needles hooked up to battery-derived stimulators (electro-acupuncture). Films of such operations are extremely dramatic.

Two major findings soon put the picture in perspective. First, it became evident that the use of acupuncture to produce analgesia for surgery is relatively rare and undependable. In china, it is used for no more than 5-10% of surgical operations, and it is carried out on selected patients. In western countries, acupuncture is rarely effective for surgery.

As a result the initial enthusiasm for the use of acupuncture for surgery dropped rapidly. However, visitors to china became more aware of its traditional use for various aches and pain and often observed impressive results in cases of low-back pain, myofascial pain and some of the neuralgias (*Melzack, 1984*).

Second, the discovery by physiologists in china that the nerves (rather than meridians) are essential for effective pain relief by acupuncture placed the practice on a firm scientific basis (*Han & Terenius, 1982*).

Nowadays, there are four distinct therapies with different rationales and efficacies :

- 1- Classical acupuncture.
- 2- Scientific acupuncture.
- 3- Acupuncture as a form of trigger point therapy.
- 4- Acupuncture with electrical stimulation.

(Chapman & Gunn, 1990)

AIM OF THE ESSAY

Description of a number of approaches for evaluation and understanding of analgesia and anesthesia by using acupuncture.