

As a family physician, who has been practicing acupuncture for 12 years, I am continually impressed by the depth that acupuncture has added to my practice. Acupuncture has given me another filter through which to sift the information that patients provide regarding their distress. Combining the Oriental and Western perspectives has enhanced my diagnostic ability as well as broadened the therapeutic options that I can offer my patients. As a result of integrating acupuncture into my practice, I believe that it has made me a better family practitioner.

Dr Peterson's article on acupuncture is a sign of the times. What was once considered a fringe medical technique is now slowly becoming established as an accepted medical modality. In fact, acupuncture has been endorsed as an accepted part of medical practice by the American Osteopathic Association, Chicago, Ill, since 1988, although the American Medical Association, Chicago, Ill, continues to regard acupuncture as an experimental medical modality. Presently, there are 3000 to 4000 physicians practicing acupuncture in the United States. Physicians who practice acupuncture are represented nationally by the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture, Santa Monica, Calif.

Acupuncture's clinical efficacy has been demonstrated in hundreds of thousands of patients in a multitude of cultures over at least 2500 years. Studies completed and now under way in the United States are confirming these millennia of clinical observations in Western terms. Acupuncture's mechanism of action remains obscure to us. Clearly, effects of acupuncture on neurotransmitter systems have been demonstrated, but much more work needs to be done. It is possible that the evolving fields of bioelectric medicine and quantum biology may have much more to offer us as to how acupuncture works. If this, indeed, becomes the case, then acupuncture and Western medicine may be the yin and yang of the medical system that is yet to come.

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