Case studies can bring added realism to conventional theory and practice. There is useful comparison between what you may have done compared with an expert in the field. Case Studies from the Medical Records of Leading Chinese Acupuncture Experts looks very briefly at 170 cases covering 73 diseases and syndromes, using the following template:

1. Patient ‘type’ age and sex
2. Chief presenting complaint
3. History of present illness
4. Current symptoms
5. Tongue and pulse findings
6. Differentiation, explanation and analysis in traditional Chinese terms
7. Simple diagnosis both in traditional Chinese and Western terms
8. Principle of treatment (eg, dispel wind)
9. Acupuncture points used
10. Effect of treatment

The first four cases cover ‘the common cold’ (Wind Cold, Exterior Cold and Interior Heat, Wind Heat attacking the Lungs and Wind Heat type). The treatment was much the same using LI4, GB20, GV14 with symptom variants. The general explanation was that the common cold arose due to the insufficiency of antipathogenic Qi with invasion of Wind Cold or Wind Heat and disturbance of the Lungs in dispersing.

All cases showed an amazingly successful outcome! It worries me that the results are so good after only 1–3 treatments, and there is little indication of any ongoing drug therapy. The pain and swelling of a hernia had disappeared after seven treatments presumably negating any requirement for surgery. This book is about traditional Chinese acupuncture (TCA) theory and practice, and the only overlap with Western medicine is the quoted diagnosis. The symptoms and findings are too vague for an accurate Western diagnosis. The cases are anecdotal and some curiously go back as far as 1958. This is no book for a beginner in acupuncture and a good knowledge of TCA is assumed.

As a medical doctor, I was interested in the use of acupuncture to treat conditions that are challenging to Western medicine. For hiccups (Stomach Qi rising up), useful points are CV17, BL17, CV12, PC6 and ST36. There are many gynaecological and breast problem cases described, including non-development of breasts (Wei syndrome) and male breast hyperplasia (Ru Pi). One case on smoking cessation reminded me about the Tianmei point (midway between LI5 and LU7, as discovered by Dr James Olms).

In summary, this book is yet another concise learning resource for traditional Chinese acupuncturists but practitioners of the Western acupuncture approach will find some ‘nuggets’ of treatment techniques that will add to one’s therapeutic repertoire.

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