

What God forgot to tell surgeons: the science of acupuncture

Daniel Keown. Published by Original Medical Publishing, 2013, 356 pp. £2.02 (Kindle). ASIN: B009ETBEA8.



Dr Daniel Keown trained at Manchester University, qualifying in 1998, and has also studied traditional Chinese acupuncture at the College of Integrated Chinese Medicine in Reading (part of Kingston University) and in China.

Currently, Dr Keown combines working in accident and emergency medicine and has an acupuncture clinic in Tonbridge Wells. He dedicates his book 'To my father—a great surgeon and a good man'.

In the forward to the book, Dr Keown explains how while studying in China with Dr Wang Ju-Yi, 'one of the most respected acupuncturists in the world' who has spent '70 years thinking deeply about the mysteries of Acupuncture and the body', he realised that Dr Wang's 'deep understanding of Acupuncture shared much with embryological science'. 'Dr Ju-Yi understood it was the spaces in the

body where Acupuncture acted', when he asked his teacher if he was aware of the parallels between embryology and Chinese acupuncture channels he replied 'no...but *you* must go and write a book on it'. 'This is the first part of that book, the part that lays the foundations for understanding Qi as a substance and the channels as real entities. It is meant to be read and enjoyed by anyone with an interest in how our amazing bodies are formed'.

The slightly humorous title of this book immediately caught my attention, and I was pleased to find it didn't disappoint. For me, the book reads like a thriller—I really didn't want to put it down. As one comment on Amazon says it is 'a must for all acupuncturists and anyone with an interest in physics and medicine'.

Somehow, Dr Keown has the ability to present and synthesise complex science, anatomy, physiology, neuroscience, embryology and physics using simple language in a succinct, easily understandable and spellbinding way—quite an achievement!

The core of the book revolves around fascia, its structure and function, generally overlooked in conventional medicine but key to the channel theory of acupuncture as practiced by Dr Wang.

He provides an explanation for the channels of acupuncture, acupuncture points the concept of *qi* and the way in which acupuncture may work. The concept of 'organs' in Chinese medicine (the Liver, Lungs, Heart, Kidneys and Spleen etc.) can be accepted by many Western acupuncturists, although most balk at understanding the

concept of the Pericardium and even more so the Triple Burner—in the 3000-year-old medical canon the *Neijing Suwen* it is enigmatically called the 'organ with a name but no form'. Here, however, it is most elegantly presented and makes perfect sense when the fascial compartments are explained. He discusses, or rather romps through embryology, systems theory, embryological organising centres, morphogens, fractals, Sonic Hedgehog, the Fibonacci sequence and electricity. He explains how 'the acupuncture channels of the East are the fascial planes of the West'. There are some wonderful, simple metaphors and analogies throughout the book which I won't spoil by repeating here, as well as some fascinating pieces of information: did you know that salamanders can regenerate limbs if injured? And that young children have the ability to regenerate the tips of their fingers?

Priced at £0.77 (at time of review) this has got to be the book bargain of the year. I am not used to ebooks but found this surprisingly easy, partly because it was such a gripping read.

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Editor's note At the time of publication, the book's name was changed to 'The Spark in the Machine'.

Competing interests None.

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