

## **A Rediscovery of Classical Chinese Tone Therapy**

By Dean Lloyd

An injury in my adolescence caused me to discover the healing power of tone. I was knocked down while ice skating one day; my head hit the ice with a crack. When I awoke, I was in the emergency room, and the world around me was buzzing with strange noises.

I watched as if through a cloud as my father spoke worriedly with the doctor. The pain in my head was unbearable, but when I closed my eyes, I began to hear a faint tone coming from somewhere deep inside. As I focused my mind on the tone, the pain began to subside.

I continued to suffer from headaches for many years after the accident. Each time I felt the pain returning, however, I listened for the healing tone and resonated it through my mind until the headache went away. I learned there was always a *definite frequency* that was necessary to achieve the right effect. Only much later, during my acupuncture education, did I learn I was not the first to make this discovery.

While studying for a class in the five phases, I stumbled across chapter 64 of the *Ling Shu*, which contains the following set of correspondences:

"... *shang jue* (upper *jue*) ... belongs to the liver channel of foot *jue yin* ... "

" ... *shang zhi* (upper *zhi*) ... belongs to the heart channel of arm *shao yin* ... "

" ... *shang gong* (upper *gong*) ... belongs to the spleen channel of foot *tai yin* ... "

" ... *shang shang* (upper *shang*) ... belongs to the lung channel of arm *tai yin* ... "

" ... *shang yu* (upper *yu*) ... belongs to the kidney channel of foot *shao yin* ... "

As a musicologist, I immediately recognized what the text was referring to. Here were the five notes (*wu yin*) of the Chinese pentatonic scale, each being matched with an acupuncture channel through the principle of systematic correspondence. The authors were clearly inviting their readers to use tone as a method of treatment, but as was often the case in the classical literature, they were leaving the clinical details to posterity.

I decided to conduct an experiment. Using pitch standards derived from a modern Oriental reference and a custom-made flute set to the pentatonic scale, I fashioned an experiment that assessed pulse changes while the tones were played on a tape. A Doppler meter was used to ensure objectivity of the pulse measurements. While playing the tones had a discernible impact on my subjects' pulse readings, the changes produced were opposite those expected, i.e., excess pulses seemed to become more excess, and so on. It was only later that I learned the reason for this result: modern pitch standards are not the same as those used when the *Ling Shu* was written.

Shortly after my "failed" experiment, I sought out the help of Fabian Maman, the famous French musician and composer-turned-acupuncturist. This was the turning point in my research. Up until this point, I had assumed Chinese "tone" therapy would be a matter of otoconduction: finding a certain frequency that patients would hear through their auditory canals. Fabian had a completely different approach; he used tuning forks to stimulate acupuncture points using a methodology he had spent 20 years developing. His tone therapy was thus acupunctural; it communicated the requisite frequency into any point of the body through *aqua*conduction, i.e., through the fluid medium in cells. To my knowledge, Fabian should be credited as the first person to use tuning forks in this manner. The stem of the resonating fork is held gently against the selected points in a manner similar to the *teishins* of modern Japan.

Why tuning forks? To begin with, they emit a *pure* tone, i.e., a tone without harmonics. Because pure tones rarely occur in nature, their uniqueness causes the body to pay much greater attention to what would otherwise be a very weak stimulus. Furthermore, the construction of the tuning fork places the stem at the central antinode (the part of the stationary wave that vibrates the widest). This means the stem vibrates *up* and *down*, in a manner similar to the lift-and-thrust motion of an acupuncture needle. In this respect, tuning forks are very similar to the two-tone *zeng* bells of the Zhou Dynasty, a unique instrument that was used for communal healing purposes.

Even more importantly, Fabian helped me find the correct pitch standard for the authentic Zhou Dynasty pentatonic scale. The ancient Chinese built this scale from a fundamental of F#, not the "C" of the modern Western scale. The accuracy of this choice was later confirmed by acoustic readings measured on recently unearthed *zeng* bells from the Warring States period. Using the ancient laws of systematic correspondence, the classics had associated F# with the Earth phase; G# with Metal; A# with Wood; C# with Fire; and D# with Water.

Armed with true classical pitch standards and a set of stainless steel tuning forks, I spent the next five years researching and experimenting, until one day I realized I had rediscovered a system that perfectly combined classical acupuncture theory with classical Chinese musicology. The match of the two came easy, for I learned - indeed, found proof - that the most fundamental theories of acupuncture itself, those of the Five Phases and the 12 meridians, had evolved out of Chinese music theory. Most important of all, this new system worked *clinically*, for myself and my students.

The ideas and techniques that derived from my research took me many steps beyond Fabian's groundbreaking work. This system, performed with pure tone, can be used as a solo treatment modality, or it can be integrated with other therapies such as acupuncture, moxibustion or Oriental bodywork. It can be used with both Five Phase and modern Chinese treatment styles.

The tone system is based on the following concepts and practices:

1. the stimulation of acupuncture points with high-quality stainless steel tuning forks, "resonance bells" (an invention of mine), and the five classical Chinese instruments (strings; drums; bells; flutes; and ocarinas) as therapeutic tools;
2. the incorporation of the treatment room itself as a resonance vehicle in therapy;
3. the use of authentic Zhou Dynasty pitch standards; classical Chinese scale structure; and classical Chinese musical-medical theory;
4. the musical "creation" of the five phases through the generation of perfect fifths (*wu du xiao sheng*);
5. the systematic correspondence between specific frequencies and points, channels, organs, tissues, etc.;
6. the intergenerational relationship between the pentatonic scale, associated with the five phases and the five *zang* organs, and the Chinese chromatic scale (*shi er lu*), associated with the 12 meridians;
7. the simultaneous use of two tuning forks to communicate a therapeutic intention, and the use of specific intervallic relationships, such as the perfect fifth and the major third, to steer a treatment

toward tonification or reduction; and

8. the octavic relationship between the visible color spectrum and the Chinese chromatic scale.

Together with my fellow researcher, John Pirog, we have been able to solve problems that have puzzled acupuncturists for centuries. We now know the reason for the sequence of channels in the midnight/midday cycle (which is based on the five phases but follows neither the *sheng* nor *ke* cycles); the reason for the curious number associations for the five phases (e.g., 7 for fire, 8 for wood, and so on); and the reason why, out of 12 possible five phase sequences, only the *sheng* and *ke* cycles stand out in therapy.

### **Case History**

A 34-year-old man, 5'7", 128 pounds, complained of sharp pain in the medial aspect of the wrist due to carpal tunnel syndrome. At the first treatment, the pain score in the region of P7 was an eight out of 10. In addition, there was a dull ache at the LI10 region bilaterally. The patient worked at a computer in excess of six hours per day. He had been diagnosed with AIDS five years ago, and was taking protease inhibitors. He had no other complaints besides the wrist pain.

**Pulse:** Kidney position deficient

**Diagnosis:** Kidney deficiency

**Treatment:** I began by supplementing Ki7 with D#, the pentatonic tone for water, as the primary fork, with G#, the pentatonic tone for metal, as the secondary fork. Next, I supplemented Lu8 with G# alone. This completed the root treatment.

For the local treatment, I supplemented TW4, Lu9, PC7 and SI4, all with D#. I then followed up with about five minutes of massage on both arms.

After finishing the session, the patient's pain score was reduced to almost zero. On previous occasions I had performed massage therapy, but had never experienced this dramatic an improvement.

This is one of many successful cases treated using tones. I have treated children without any trauma from these tones, and even heard from two parents that their children asked to be treated with tones with they were ailing. I have seen changes in symptoms such as headaches, acute strains and nausea be reduced in moments using the tones on acupuncture points, in many cases without using a single needle. There have

also been instances where I haven't seen a noticeable change, so I will use acupuncture alone or with another technique like shiatsu for those patients. In addition, there is a technique I use with the needle *in situ*, so don't throw away those needles.

The work in discovering these tones has been completed, and acupuncturists are now able to use them in practice. I feel the use of and research on tones cannot be ignored, and will advance our profession and improve the art of Oriental medicine.

If you are interested in learning more about the use of tone, feel free to contact me at the telephone number below.



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