

# Chinese Medicine

by Jeri Petz



**Many sources say that the history of Traditional Chinese Medicine can be traced back to approximately three thousand years ago.** "Veterinary Acupuncture: Ancient Art to Modern Medicine" states: "Legend has it that veterinary acupuncture was discovered when lame horses used in battle were found to become sound after being hit by arrows at distinct points."

The first veterinary acupuncture report in Europe was published in 1828, but many US citizens were not aware of Chinese Medicine until the Nixon era. The International Veterinary Acupuncture Society (IVAS) was founded in 1974 by a group of veterinarians, and has steadily grown since. In 1988, the American Veterinary Medical Association acknowledged that veterinary acupuncture and acupressure are valid modalities.

**As you will see, Chinese Medicine is quite unlike Western Medicine.** Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) includes acupuncture, herbal medicine, acupressure, food therapies, medication and exercises. It is a very different, yet logical, way of thinking and dealing with problems to assist your four-legged friend. The goal of acupuncture and Chinese herbs is to rebalance the body by treating the meridians, which are located beneath the skin's surface. Here is how that works:

**Qi is energy circulating in the body.** Qi, (also spelled Chi, and pronounced, ĀúChee,Àù), is the life force energy. There are 12 major meridians and 8 extra meridians through which the Qi circulates. Meridians are like rivers which distribute Qi throughout the body. If any of these meridians have a blockage that causes the energy to not flow properly, problems develop, such as illness, swelling, and pain. There are several factors that can affect the flow of Qi through the meridians. For example, weather, your mood, foods eaten, and much more affect the flow of Qi. Acupuncture is used to stimulate the flow of Qi through some meridians, and to inhibit the flow of Qi in other channels (meridians) to restore balance. When the Qi is balanced, you're healthy. Too much Qi in one area, and not enough in others creates an imbalance which causes health problems.

**The meridians follow aspects of the circulatory, lymphatic, muscular, and nervous systems.** Qi flows through the meridians directing the blood and other body fluids that keep us alive. This quote might help explain: "The meridians are like major power lines running through the body, and the acupuncture points are the relay switches to access the energy." The acupuncture needles and herbs are being used to access the energy on the acupuncture points. Chinese herbs work in the same sort of way as acupuncture. Herbs also have the function of balancing the body by treating energy blockages, by treating conditions like heat, excess, cold, deficiency, and other imbalances.

There are 37 actions or functions for herbs, (such as warming, clearing, reducing\*, and tonifying\*\*). \*Reducing means that it will help get rid of an excess of energy for a specific meridian. \*\*Tonifying means that it will strengthen the meridian it works on.

Traditionally, in Chinese medicine, a variety of techniques are used to diagnosis the imbalances for an individual. The diagnostic process uses symptoms, and appearance, (including dry skin, weight, and odors). Also used are tongue diagnosis, (the tongue is looked at), and pulse diagnosis, which differs quite a bit from Western pulse taking. When checking the tongue, practioners look at color, shape, tongue coating, and cracks in the tongue. There are certain spots on the tongue that relate to the organs, (such as the liver and spleen), and they'll note how those certain areas look also.

When doing pulse diagnosis, the pulse is felt in 3 positions and 2 layers, each corresponding to an organ and meridian. There are 6 pulses on the right front paw: Large Intestine, Lungs, Stomach, Spleen/Pancreas, Kidney Yang, Pericardium. There are 6 pulses on the left front paw: Small Intestine, Heart, Gall bladder, Liver, Urinary Bladder, and Kidney Yin.

(NOTE: description of Kidney Yang and Kidney Yin follows)

Using all this information will help practioners determine where the energy blockages are, and how they should be treated. Some practioners have developed their own ways of reading the energy, and might have something that they do instead of, or in addition to, the traditional diagnostic techniques.

**The basic principle of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is to restore balance.**

- If a disease is due to an excess, that excess must be drained.
- If it is due to a deficiency, that deficiency should be tonified.
- If the problem is due to heat, that heat should be cooled.
- If the problem is due to cold, that cold should be warmed.
- If it is due to dryness, that dryness should be moistened.
- And, if it is due to dampness, that dampness should be dried.

**The root cause for the occurrence and development of disease in Chinese medicine is imbalance between Yin and Yang.** Yin and Yang are opposite forces, that when balanced, work together. Examples of Yin are water, passive, slow, night, and moon. Examples of Yang are fire, active, fast, day, and sun.

**Chinese Medicine acknowledges several causes for disease.**

External causes include wind, cold, damp, dryness, and heat. Wind includes things such as air conditioning, and some say it also includes microwaves, and radiation. The source of the external cause does not have to be a natural source. Internal causes are known as the, "Seven Emotions,". The emotions are anger, joy, grief, fear, worry, and anxiety. There is disagreement in various translations on what the exact "Seven Emotions" are, but these six are pretty constant. Other causes of disease include constitution, diet, exercise, rest, and trauma.

In TCM seizures are often caused by heat generated by the liver, which generates wind, which causes the seizure. (The image of someone caught up in a wind storm might help explain that terminology.) Seizures can also commonly be caused by imbalances in the heart meridian. Deficient Kidney Yin can also play a role. If Kidney Yin is low, Yang is dominant, and heat is Yang. It is important to treat the Liver Heat, (or Heart, depending on the diagnosis), but also to work to bring the Kidney Yin back up, and in balance with Kidney Yang. The Kidneys, in TCM, are Water. Water helps Wood, (Liver), and hinders Fire (Heart), so if the Kidneys are out of balance, that could be a factor in the Liver or Heart imbalances that trigger seizures. By using the various methods of diagnosing imbalances, a practioner will be able to determine the imbalances that need to be treated in any individual, and the best method for treating those imbalances.

**For further reading on TCM, I highly recommend the following books:**

- **Four Paws Five Directions** (by: Cheryl Schwartz, DVM)
- **The Well Connected Dog: A Guide to Canine Acupressure** (by: Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis)
- **Canine Acupressure: A treatment workbook** (by: Nancy Zidonis and Marie Soderberg)
- **Complementary and Alternative Veterinary Medicine: Principles and Practice** (edited by Allen M Schoen DVM)

and Susan G. Wynn DVM)

- **Veterinary Acupuncture: Ancient Art to Modern Medicine** (edited by Allen Schoen)
- **Veterinary Acupuncture:** (by: Klide and Kung)

Some sites on the Internet you might like to peruse that deal mainly with veterinary acupuncture:

<http://users.med.auth.gr/~karanik/english/veter.htm>

<http://www.altvetmed.com/acupunct.html>

<http://www.msnbc.com/news/185564.asp>

<http://users.med.auth.gr/~karanik/english/webjour.htm>