History and Progress of Japanese Acupuncture

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Received 1 March 2007; Accepted 17 April 2007

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Abstract

After Chiso brought acupuncture to Japan from Wu (China) in the sixth century, it has progressed in unique ways within the various historical milieus of the past 1500 years. Ishitsu-rei, the first medical law of Japan established in 701, explains the medical system of acupuncture in detail showing that acupuncture was being administered under the authorization of the national government. For the next 1200 years, acupuncture continued to be an important facet of public health in Japan. From the Azuchimomoyama through the Edo period, the knowledge exchange with China became active and people who studied in China developed new styles and techniques of acupuncture treatment and organized their own private schools or ryu-ha in Japan. In 1635, when the Edo government decided to close the country, Japan cut-off exchange with foreign countries for over 200 years. The national isolation caused some development that was unique to Japan. During that time, acupuncture filtered into people's everyday lives. Moxibustion, in particular, became popular as a treatment that ordinary people could practice by themselves. Also in this period of isolation, Western medicine was imported from Holland, the only country allowed to maintain trade with Japan. This novel modern medicine had a strong impact on Japanese medicine, which has its foundation of Chinese traditional medicine. At the same time, Japanese acupuncture was introduced into Europe via Holland. When Japan opened its borders in 1865 period, the new government was eager to accept Western culture to the extent of prohibiting the progress of Japanese acupuncture for a period of time. Even so, Japanese acupuncture has survived and flourished up to the present day due to the strong demand and the great efforts of the practitioners. Scientific studies are now in the process of establishing a firm evidence base for over a millennium of clinical use, respecting the classic ideas of the traditional treatment.
Want information about Japanese acupuncture, its history and differences against Traditional Chinese Acupuncture? Read our articles to learn more! In Japan, acupuncture has been an important part of their medical practice and system for over 1400 years. However, it was in fact, a Chinese monk-physician named Chiso that brought acupuncture along with other medical techniques to Japan in the 6th century. During this time, China was far more advanced in the practice of acupuncture than Japan but since then acupuncture in Japan has evolved in its own very unique way. Between 1868 and 1988, approximately 4000 medical books were imported from Japan to China.