

Korean Hand Acupuncture

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During my studies of Oriental Medicine at the renown Kyung Hee University, in Seoul, Korea, I was introduced to the Korean Hand Acupuncture (KHA), Sooji Chim. At the end of my four years in Korea I consider it the biggest treasure I took home from the Far East concerning Oriental Medicine.

Historical background

Dr. Woo Tae Yoo, who is the founder of this unique and highly efficacious branch of OM, is a native Korean. Only in 1971 he discovered the basic principle that the whole body can be found in the hand. At that time he had a very intense headache and discovered that a point at the top of his middle finger will ease his pain. Finally he could map out the whole body in the hand. 4 years later he added to this system of corresponding points the 14 meridians of the body acupuncture which he found in the hands as well. His most significant discovery he considers, however, is the Yin Yang Pulse Diagnosis. This pulse method is mentioned in the Yellow Emperor, but its location has not been explained clearly. Through these two discoveries a whole set of new treatments could be developed in the KHA.

From 1978 the first scientific symposium involving Japanese and Korean practitioners was held in Seoul. In 1987 the first edition about the KHA appeared in English, but is only since the mid 90-ties that the KHA was spread among different nations around the world, especially the US. And only from last December I started to introduce KHA to German doctors.

At present Korean Hand Acupuncture is practised in over 30 countries mainly by some native Koreans. In Korea there is a huge organisation with over 1 million members. Most of these members use the KHA for themselves and are laymen. In Korea the first levels of treatments are taught to anybody who has interest in it. There is saying in South Korea: "If you do not know Korean Hand Acupuncture you must be from North Korea".

As the Korean Hand Acupuncture was not developed at the university, it is only now slowly recognised by the Oriental Doctors in Korea. One might have heard of the Sujok Chim, a hand and foot acupuncture, which also comes from Korea. This was developed by an early student of the original Sooji Chim, Dr. Park.

Fundamental Concepts of KHA

KHA respects the fundamentals of Oriental Medicine (OM), in particular the Yin / Yang and the Five Element Theory. In fact I find that in KHA the diagnosis and treatment sticks more to the Five Element Theory than I experienced it in the clinical practices of the university hospital of the Kyung Hee University. There are, however also new aspects such as Dr. Yoo's understanding of the constitutions of the human being. He introduces the concept of a Yin, a Yang and a Kidney constitution. These constitutions can be quickly diagnosed, however can change f.e. through a disease. There is also an inherited constitution, which is important to know in order to estimate the seriousness of the actual disease.

The treatment of KHA is performed on both hands. It is based upon the theory, that the hand is a micro-universe of the human body. The backside of the body is represented on the backside of the hand and the foreshide on the palm of the hand. Basically, the body is divided in half down the middle and problems on the right side are treated on the right hand and vice versa. Problems on the vertebrae or the gastro- intestinal tract till the head can be treated on both hands.

The functions of human physiology can be influenced by stimulating specific corresponding points on the hand for the treatment and prevention of specific conditions and for health maintenance. These points can be stimulated by the the small Sooji Chim needle, by pellets, by Moxa or electro acupuncture.

Different levels of treatment

There are different levels of treatment in KHA. The first level, as already mentioned, is the corresponding point therapy. As simple and clear as it is as astonishing are it is effects. This method has become in Korea a kind of hone medicine. It is a wonderful option to the ever so popular Western approach of reaching for that quick fix - a pill for whatever ails you. Again and again I am amazed how precise the hand can tell you the exact location of your pain and / or your disorder or imbalance in your body. It enables you to some degree to make a diagnosis without asking the patient, which of course I do not recommend.

As I stated before either needles or pellets can be used and especially effective is the use of Moxa, a herb that is in a cone and burned over specific acupuncture points. The importance of this treatment cannot be underestimated. I like to use the example of an iceberg in your back yard. Now this can be of great inconvenience, though not life threatening. So you could indeed take an ice pick (like an acupuncture needle in this analogy) and chip away. Indeed, you will make a little progress, but if you simply built a fire (i.e., Moxa) then the desired result will be much faster and you can sit back and relax and get great results. I have used Moxa for the treatment of Raynauds, pain, chronic digestion, problems and even turning breech positioned babies. This is a very effective treatment when appropriate. I also use the electro acupuncture instrument of KHA. In may cases it is more effective than needles.

Due to the fact that the 14 meridians are on the hand as well, which are analogue to the body meridians, the possibility of KHA goes beyond a pure reflexology treatment. One of the major treatment is to sedate or tonify a meridian according to the diagnosis. On these meridians we find the five ancient points and in most cases the special meaning of the body acupuncture points are the same in the KHA. In the KHA a special organ therapy as well as the Five Element therapy was

developed. However the foundation for these treatments is the pulse diagnosis, which is the Yin / Yang Pulse Diagnosis. While KHA also knows and uses the traditional Chinese pulse diagnosis the Yin Yang Pulse Diagnosis is different and allows a very precise diagnosis of the imbalances in the body. If this diagnosis is done in a proper way the following treatment will immediately bring a change in the pulse quality. So the practitioner can always check if his treatment is good or at least has the right direction.

Besides these treatments there are different ones like the ring, upper/lower, special point treatment a.s.o.. However there is a clear hierarchy when to use which treatment. The goal of a treatment is always to establish a harmony between the Yin and Yang Pulse, to reduce the pain of the patient and to strengthen his general Qi. Treatment of chronic diseases naturally take more sessions than acute diseases.

The advantages of the Korean Hand Acupuncture

I am very impressed with Dr. Yoo's system for several reasons:

It is the most efficacious acupuncture treatment I have personally experienced in clinical practice.

It is not necessary for the one being treated to remove clothes as is sometimes necessary with body treatments.

There are several options to using needles and this is extremely important in certain circumstances:

- When a person has a fear of needles
- When a child needs treatment
- When a person is too sensitive to the deqi of the treatment

Patients can be quickly taught how to treat themselves in between upper level treatments by a trained clinician.

It is a very mobile modality of health care. A small kit of needles or pellets can easily and quickly fit in a purse or waist pouch.

There is no danger of an organ - injury, as the small needles are only inserted 2 mm into the hand.

Clinical experiences with KHA

I am using this method now since almost four years and treated several hundred patients with it. I have used it for patients with migraine, shoulder / arm syndrome, lumbago, colds, allergies, alopecia areata (totalis), and other skin diseases, high and low blood pressure, Lupus, menopause disorders a.s. o.. With more than 70% of my patients I had good and often very good results. Of course there are also limits to this treatment but the effectiveness is so enormous that I use this treatment often alone or combine it with other treatments, such as herbal medicine, homeopathy or western school medicine. I had several patients who had undergone all western diagnosis and treatments with no or very little result and I could achieve a significant betterment sometimes after one treatment. This also holds for some degenerative diseases. In several cases the result of the treatment was not satisfying, either because the organic structure was irreversibly destroyed, the patient did not

continue long enough or a chronic disease got better only for a shorter time.

KHA on the foundation of a correct diagnosis can always be applied, as a complementary treatment or a treatment alone. Till now there are only few clinical outcome studies: a work which has to be done to draw the line between personal enthusiasm and clinical reality. However I am confident that much of my enthusiasm for KHA will be validated by clinical studies.

When you study KHA it may also help you to get a better understanding of TCM in general, because the use of the different treatments in KHA is very logical and is based on a clear understanding of Yin and Yang and the Five Elements. KHA has just started to become recognised in the world of acupuncture and of clinical medicine. I am convinced that it will find its place there because the patients will ask for this medicine once they know it.