

## Body Wisdom; Healing Crisis

By Michael O. Smith, MD

We learn that the body is a passive machine which requires proper cleaning and fuel. Later we learn that the body can be imbalanced and make itself sick. Emotions can be dangerous. Mental blockage and spiritual weakness seem ever more prevalent.

If not for healthcare – both conventional and alternative, how would we all survive and prosper? Animals in nature manage quite well. Indeed, human beings survived without modern medicine for millennia. Traditional healthcare often involves support for the body's own healing mechanisms. As I have written earlier (“The Nature of Qi”\*) acupuncture and all Qi-flow therapies “help the body help itself.” Some of us have come to appreciate the body's spontaneous healing potential.

Following the implied lesson of various textbooks, many of us believe that the body must be told what to do. When we under-value our partner (the patient's own Qi), we marginalize the practice of acupuncture. If the patient's body is primarily a source of illness and weakness, how can a technique that only helps the body help itself be of significant value? Isn't acupuncture relegated to secondary status by the weakness of its method of action? How can acupuncture trigger changes that go beyond emotional and muscular adjustment?

The body is able to implement prolonged “treatment plans” without any help from outsiders. We need to recognize that most of the time the body is the primary healthcare provider. This paper will give several examples from my own life. In my workshop at the Pacific Symposium, we will discuss other personal and clinical examples of body wisdom.

I was born with a bilateral cleft palate. I had 3 surgeries as a baby, a speech defect for several years, a large palatal scar, an artificial uvula, and long term poor innervation of the epiglottis. As a child I had serious eczema and other indications of internal heat. Frequent alternating hot and cold sensations continued until I started using sweat releasing herbs. The eczema was relieved after a series of fasts in my 20s. My interest in natural healing came about because I began to help caring for my healthy newborn daughter. Three years later I was introduced to acupuncture.

In my 30's the chronic latent heat continued in my face, intestines, and legs. I had a suppressed pulse, particularly in the 3<sup>rd</sup> position. My tongue had a central groove with cheesy debris in the posterior area. Reddened tooth mark indentations were evident. There was a dark discoloration under my eyes in my mid-40's. There were several chronically tender areas in the abdomen, including the navel.

In my 40's my intestines began to retain fluid. There was such severe bloating that my navel reversed to become external. The abdominal pressure caused significant hemorrhoidal bleeding. Nevertheless the whole process felt comfortable to me. I never took any treatment for this condition. Subsequently all my tongue signs resolved and the dark color disappeared underneath my eyes. In the past few years the bloating has disappeared from the colon and is diminishing from the small intestines. The hemorrhoids have been minimal for years. From my point of view, the abdominal bloating was a prolonged healing crisis which expelled stagnant blood and latent heat. Of course, there is no way to prove such a reality.

My legs had been affected for many years. I have had frequent blisters and sores on all toes since adolescence. I had a large spontaneous open sore on my right leg as a

teenager. My legs began to have pitting edema in my 30's. I considered this to be spleen-related like the bloating and thought little of it. Later my legs often felt tired and I had cramps in my left leg sometimes after walking a short distance. This was annoying but seemed age-related. I had a series of sea water massages of my calves which provided a few days of more enthusiastic walking.

One day I took a trip for a very successful hospital consultation. Afterward I celebrated by taking a swim in a cold mountain lake. When I got home I noticed that my left leg was suddenly very swollen between the ankle and the knee. At first I thought it was a bite or some kind of recent trauma. There was no tender or reddened area. Even on that first day I walked with more energy and stamina. The left foot was not swollen or affected in any way. The swelling continued for several years. During that time my walking steadily improved. Blistering on the foot was quite frequent but was never associated with sores or pain. I did not take any treatment for this condition. It was strange looking, but I was happy that my walking was consistently improving. In the past 5 years the swelling has decreased steadily so that now there is only a hint of induration near the ankle. My toes have less sores and itching than at any time since childhood. There have been various heat release rashes and temporary sores on the left leg. The itching and sores on the toes of the right foot have also improved greatly. There has never been any deep tenderness.

The abdominal bloating was gradual and the leg swelling was sudden, but otherwise both processes seem similar in duration and outcome. The chronic latent heat in the leg has apparently been expelled by the leg edema. I can walk faster and more

comfortably at this time than any time in the past 15 years. The joy of spontaneous running is just around the corner

### SPINAL CHANGES

When I was a child, I had weak spinal strength. Carrying a backpack was quite painful. Standing made my shoulders sore. Several times I had sharp sternal pains that came and went for no apparent reason. I loved swimming which is a posture-sparing exercise. Being a child I never complained. At age 30 when I swam a mile, only my neck hurt. I could jog only 100 yards before my shoulders hurt. I walked on my toes and could only carry forward weight.

I met an energy medicine doctor from England, Michael Ash. He taught a simple meditation exercise. You lie flat on your back with knees flexed for comfort. You hold your palms over the middle of the abdomen. There was considerable tingling and my head began rolling back and forth for several minutes. This was a great feeling. My neck never felt so loose. Each day the same neck movement occurred. The neck roll stopped after the first week. The spontaneous neck roll has never returned as part of this exercise.

I felt that the neck roll was an indication of what was possible. I had begun to sleep on the floor which was immediately more comfortable. I also started using negative heel shoes and lumbar support chairs. When I laid on my back, only a few parts of my body touched the floor. Most muscles were tight. I could only sleep on my belly. Sleeping on my shoulders was too painful. Sleeping on the floor and the meditation exercise seemed to be gradually helping me to stretch out and become less rigid. My body had shown me a goal of excellent flexibility. It looked like a long slow process.

Every month or so, I would have a sudden spontaneous pain some where on my back or legs. These pains were always one-sided and always faded away in a 2-5 days. The pains were often severe, but they correlated with relaxation of a muscle in that area or elsewhere. My body was slowly overcoming each part of the rigid system. The next section of this paper describes an example on this zig zag pain release process. The process seemed necessary work to me, so I never took pain relief medications. I remember being upset by severe lumbar pain, but being simultaneous pleased that my alignment was suddenly better and my range of motion had improved. I didn't use acupuncture for these episodes, because pressure points did not seem to be active and I came to feel that Qi-flow therapy was in favor of this painful method of growth. In contrast, my acupuncture treatments always worked for root canals and occasional traumatic injuries.

As my spine became more healthy, various temporary symptoms appeared seemingly as part of the chronic healing crisis. I had tinnitus for a few weeks. Episodes of hypoglycemia occurred for a month. I had a strange kind of urinary urgency. I could sit many hours with no problem. Transatlantic flights were never a difficulty. However as soon as I stood up (and changed my back alignment), there was severely painful urgency. This problem stopped completely a few years later. I have had been numerous skin reactions over areas of the back and the sternum as muscle relaxation promoted a release of toxins.

I felt that the spinal improvements led to the digestive changes and bloating, although I could never correlate any specific back change with a specific intestinal change. Today my back and legs touch the floor completely when I lie down. My hips no

longer rotate externally. Supporting weight over the lumbo-sacral joint is improving considerably. The trapezius, scapular, and shoulder muscles relax easily. Sleeping on either side is satisfactory. My epiglottis sensations all fully recovered, and I am able to expel food consciously for the first time. My neck has remained stiff throughout this process. It seems to be the last line of protection while these adjustments are going on.

### CHANGES WITHIN THE SKULL

There have been a series of changes and improvements in my upper mouth and mid skull areas. The incessant heat sensations that occurred in my face as a youth disappeared years ago. A bulging vein on my left temple has also vanished. A basal cell lesion on my nose also seemed to remove deep-seated heat. Mucus accumulation in my sinuses and upper respiratory system has also diminished greatly. I never took anti-histamines. The mucus subsided as the heat subsided, not because of diet changes.

Occasionally I have felt a brief throbbing pain that seemed to be in the middle of my skull rather than the conventional headache. These pains lasted a minute or less and occurred only when my body was relaxed. It seems to be a cranial bone adjustment and has correlated with a more even bite.

I met a holistic dentist who explained to me that the action of chewing is a feedback mechanism to help the body maintain proper cranial bone alignment. In a similar manner, interaction between the multiple bones in the hands and feet provide feedback information for pelvic and shoulder alignment. Body wisdom needs a rich source of data to maintain proper alignment.

One evening as a defective tooth became more loose, there was a sudden heat sensation on my forehead with a release of sweat. A moment later there was an itchy red

flush over my left LI-4 point. Soon there were heat waves over GB-20. These reactions were over in 15 minutes. My mouth and upper spine felt more comfortable afterward, and has continued to do so. I have had naps with intense sweating on the head at 11PM on many occasions. This timing correlates with the Gall Bladder time on the Chinese clock – an appropriate correlation to the GB-20 release sensations. My upper teeth were always quite crooked due to the cleft palate surgery and the lack of bony support. I had a series of root canals and crown on the upper right side. There was a solid fortified wall of teeth. One of the devitalized teeth finally broke and needed to be pulled out.

We often hear about problems associated with mercury in dental fillings. In my experience the wall of devitalized teeth itself represented a Qi blockage. Once there was a opening in the wall, there was relief.

#### EXAMPLE OF A HEALING CRISIS

Earlier this year I improved to a such degree that my colon felt especially free. I took a several mile walk with no hip pain. I was sitting comfortably during an evening nap. Suddenly I felt a throbbing pain in my left hip and knee. There were waves of heat which seemed to increase with gentle pressure on GB-34. I slept well in spite of the pain. In the morning that leg was still quite sore and my knee buckled if weight was placed on it. However the left leg muscle had lengthened so that the whole leg touched the floor when I lay on my back.

On the second day the soreness was now primarily in the mid-thigh. Sleep was more painful. I had to use a pillow between my legs for the first time in my life. I walked with a limp. By the 4<sup>th</sup> day I was walking fine and could flex at the waist more deeply than before. My foot arches seemed more real and firm. There was a temporary stiffness

of my left thumb accompanied by blotches on that side of the wrist. The whole process lasted less than a week. I have had dozens of these episodes at various locations in my torso and extremities. Each time the net result has been greater flexibility and a more stable posture.

### RESTORATIVE MECHANISM

Begin by doing “nothing” well. Sleep includes a loss of consciousness which helps us sort and cleanse mental images. Yawning suggests that sleep also includes an expansion of respiration and a loosening of the upper spine. Fasting is a universally recognized method of spiritual improvement. On a simpler level, fasting is like closing a store so that inventory and cleaning can be done more effectively. Cleansing symptoms such as bad breath, sweat, and irritability are part of the fasting process. The result is a greater vitality and clarity. Sleep is a fast of short duration. Many people have symptoms of toxin release when they wake up in the morning. Consuming any item, even coffee, breaks the fast. (Hence the word “break-fast”). These people feel better because the uncomfortable cleansing symptoms have stopped, even though their bodies are actually more unhealthy, because the necessary cleaning has been stopped. It is basic housework. A room is messier while it is being cleaned.

### HEAT RELEASE PHENOMENA

Twelve years ago I started going to mineral hot springs on a frequent basis. Frequently I had a brief sleep and a heavy sweat after being in the pool. I always felt light and energetic afterward. On many occasions my skin got red and felt like sun burn blisters as part of the heat release process. This internal sun burn never correlated with actual exposure to the sun.



Latent heat is a chronic deep process that causes fatigue and drains vitality, as shown by a suppressed pulse. Sleep may be heavy and unsatisfying. As the condition improves there are symptoms of release including pimples, blisters, flushing, and itchy skin lesions which may bleed. Stiff fibrous ridges (on the feet, for instance) will smooth out as the heat releases from its deep location and is excreted from the body. Overly tight muscles and indurated areas will soften.

A temporary cold reaction may occur as a balancing reaction. One acupuncture patient of mine had a chill during treatment and then had a brief development of cold hands and distended blue veins. It was a surprising development. Recovering one's balance usually means leaning the opposite direction for a brief period of time. Being able to accept variability and risk is often part of the process of recovery.

#### OPPORTUNISM

Life develops in the midst of drastic change. Surviving life forms take advantage of change. When a viral infection occurs, the body may extend the cleansing response to expel excess toxins in a rash or discharge excess mucus. Once these reactions have started, natural "treatment" often increases the cleansing reaction rather than merely drying up the mucus. Emotional reactions and sudden weather changes can lead to cleansing and helpful readjustments.

In most ordinary living situations, organisms do not have a chance to eat a "balanced" diet. We are built to live in the context of irregular availability of food. Several times when I have come to India, the sudden dietary change triggers temporary loose stools which reduce chronic bloating and seem to be an improvement rather than an

illness. Changes in bile flow and intestinal movement need to vary with circumstances as with any liver-related activity.

On several occasions my body has taken advantage of a positive relaxed interlude in my life. The lumbar spasm referred to previously occurred during a very supportive conference. On a Hawaiian vacation I suddenly felt an intestinal spasm which made eating food quite uncomfortable for the whole week. I rested a lot, soaked in the pool and returned much more comfortable than before the trip. When we are safe and rested, it can be a good time to clean the house.

#### WE STUDY THE WRONG STUFF

Basic biology focuses on the living cell and the process of evolution. Critical functions are affected by many variables. Nature is very inter connected and redundant. Many levels of adjustment mechanism have accumulated over the millennia. We carry this legacy. The most important biological activities are highly nuanced.

Main stream Western medicine focused on processes that can be described in a linear mechanical manner. The pumping action of the heart becomes more primary than the liver. Often Western medical treatments suppress the body's own subtle responses (by anti-histamine and anti inflammatory drugs), so that a simpler context can be attained. Such a method might temporarily assist surgery, for example; but it is very counter productive in long term rehabilitation. As human beings, we need to have complex, variable problems. When things get linear and predictable, it is usually too late.

## BODY WISDOM

We need to learn to appreciate the body's healing intelligence. It is a product of evolution. No survival traits could be more important than homeostasis, tissue repair, and the removal of toxins. As acupuncturists, we have to understand the nature of body wisdom.

The body is able to postpone many problems. Traumatic emotions are stored in muscles. Overwhelming sensations are stored in the unconscious memory. Unmanageable heat or dampness are stored in tissues. Dietary excess is stored as fat and mucus. Each of these events creates Qi blockage and depletion. When circumstances are satisfactory, the blockage can be released and proper Qi restored. As I discussed previously, changes in diet and weather can provide opportunities for healing.

Inflammation is the accumulation of red and white blood cells along with a fluid exudate. Inflammation is the body's primary method of tissue repair and a method of infection response. Inflammation means that the circulating blood cells are actually being used. It is an important component of most healing crisis responses. The release of fluid in the intestine is a comparable problem solving response.

When you lift a suitcase, you don't say my arm hurts, you say the suitcase is heavy. This is a problem-solving approach to life. When we complain of pain without determining its functional significance, that is "peace at any price." Pain is information, not merely excess inflammation. Conditions like fibromyalgia and irritable bowel syndrome may represent self healing. Taking anti-inflammatory drugs and muscle relaxants explicitly suppress healing responses. Perhaps joint replacements might be less common if we accept the value of healing crisis adjustments of spinal imbalance.

I was asked to help a pregnant woman having unproductive labor. I used spleen 6, hoping for stronger labor. The patient fell asleep for 4 hours, woke up and delivered the baby in 2 hours. I made a naïve suggestion; her body made a more wise priority decision.

Much of our personal life is based on non-conscious patterns and choices. Some of these actions are puzzling and troublesome. Some of these actions are remarkable for their consistency and long term significance. In the area of physiology, we are much less willing to credit the body with mature long term planning ability. Our body makes constant executive decisions. It determines priorities on many complex levels. The wonderful advantage of acupuncture is that we are able to influence and guide the body's actual executive planning process. We have the privilege of relating to the life process on a high level. Acupuncture input is usually more significant than the person's own conscious desires.

Acupuncture is based on intuitive relationship. Acupuncturist related to some patients better than others. Each patient relates better to some therapists than others. More to the point, therapists relate to certain Qi imbalances better than others. Every treatment echoes in the therapists own body. When we talk with people, we can only tell others what has meaning to us. It may be something we resolve easily or it may be something that we are struggling with. Touching or needling people has the same echo effect.

Acupuncture is not equally effective by all therapists in all settings. In the same manner, Beethoven is not appreciated by all listeners. We are not being unscientific. We are just using standards of evaluation that are appropriate to highly nuanced activities that cannot be described in a linear mechanical way.

Some patients do not relate well to their own healing process. Acupuncture provides a unique benefit in this situation. It may be a brief experience or a prolonged struggle to reach our goal. That goal is to have the patient's energy presence be more powerful than ours.

\*Available from [nadaoffice@acudetox.com](mailto:nadaoffice@acudetox.com)