

Preface



There are many varieties of acupuncture, from highly traditional to outrageously avantgarde, although most practitioners are aware only of a few. This book was always intended to expand this awareness, and has been designed with acupuncture students, researchers and practitioners in mind, whether nonmedical acupuncturists, physical therapists or doctors.

It began as an attempt to organise electroacupuncture teaching materials into something more widely useful, after I had been exploring the method in practice for eight years or so, and reading the literature for a lot longer than that. I also did not want just to repeat what I had been taught or found for myself, but to pass on what was supported by more objective research. Ina Ozols of Churchill Livingstone, who had been looking for someone to write a book on electroacupuncture, expressed interest. Research and gestation began, the book started to grow ... and grow.

While the publishers wanted a thoroughgoing practical introduction to the subject, I had always stubbornly wanted to write more of a research resource, for people to dig into and discover for themselves the richness of nontraditional acupuncture. Over the years since it was first discussed in 1996, the project has developed into something which I think satisfies both the need for a textbook of reasonable length and, at a time when research is very much a focus for anyone involved in acupuncture, for a comprehensive research tool. The result should enable better practice, enhance understanding and increase knowledge.

Readers who want the basics will find their needs met in the book. Those who want more detail can find it in the longer chapter versions on the CD-Rom. And if you need to find out what has actually been done in clinical studies, the flexible CD-Rom database of more than 8000 studies on electroacupuncture and other acupuncture-related modalities should provide ample information. This also available on the Web, at www.electroacupunctureknowledge.com. For innovative content, an innovative structure seemed appropriate. Further information on the structure of this publication and how to use it can be found in the Introduction.

In life, completeness is unattainable, particularly in a large and rapidly changing field. Despite the resources of the Needham Research Institute and the British Library, and much hard work by translators, large chunks of the world acupuncture literature have remained inaccessible to me. And, given its current momentum, it will no doubt always outpace even the most diligent researcher. However, if readers do find mistakes or omissions that they can rectify, assistance would be warmly welcomed. It goes without saying that any such mistakes or omissions remain my responsibility.

On the other hand, as I am discovering, understanding does not mean having to know everything. A little mystery seasons the salad and, to quote Anaïs Nin, 'the most important of all achievements is to be a human being'.¹

Writing this book has been a huge challenge. I am grateful for the opportunity it has given me to learn and grow and to practise acupuncture more effectively for my patients. I hope it will help others to do the same.

DFM
Welwyn Garden City

Note

1 Nin A 1970 *The Journals of Anais Nin, 1939–1944* (ed G Stuhlmann). Peter Owen, London