Where Do Science And Acupuncture Meet?

**Topic & Thesis Statement**

Since its introduction to Western science in the 1970’s, acupuncture has evaded explanation in Western terms. This brings up a couple of important questions. Is Western science the only true science? Is Eastern science also valid? Where do science and acupuncture meet? According to my research, both are valid sciences but must be approached and viewed according to their own terms.

**Introduction**

The focus of my research is discovering the science behind acupuncture. For example, a Western doctor might do research by seeing the difference in effect of how a patient responds to a treatment versus how a patient who doesn’t receive treatment does (though they think they do). In contrast, it would be outside the ethics of Eastern medicine to withhold a treatment from someone who needs it, especially if the treatment has thousands of years of working results (Allchin). According to Western medicine, acupuncture is an unfounded science because it cannot be explained in Western medical terms. The Chinese, based on their observations, have come up with a system of healing with a dialogue of their own terms. It includes meridians, chi, and other such terms that have no Western equivalence in thought or in practice. This keeps acupuncture on the outskirts of scientific medicine because Western society has cornered the market when it comes to the term “science”. They have set the standard and created the guidelines and rules in which research and medicine must be practiced in order to be considered valid. This leaves little room for other cultures to have a system of “science” based on their own discoveries. Due to the fact that Acupuncture does not adhere to the traditional structure of Western science, it is not effective? There is evidence to the fact that acupuncture is effective. The challenge now is to match up the languages and results so we can all communicate with a common understanding, sort of like creating a translational dictionary. The problem with doing research on Eastern science in Western society is that most research done in the United States is largely funded by pharmaceutical companies that are interested in making a profit off the results of research. Using acupuncture in this scenario doesn’t work well as it takes away most if not all of that profit because there are no drugs to administer. The cost of the needles and moxi are minimal, and herbs are not currently a highly regulated substance. Basically, there is no place for the companies to make money so there is no incentive to research this form of
healing further. The bottom line is that in what little research that has been done on Eastern science by the West, there have been proven results that acupuncture is effective. It is a “science” according to another culture’s discoveries in finding what works. Our challenge with continuing to move forward is to help bring forth a complementary way of approaching “science”. The all encompassing goal that is being strived for is to bring Western and Eastern culture’s science together so that we all can benefit from the wealth of knowledge that both sides provide.

**Topic Analysis**

**-Keywords**

acupuncture – treatment, traditional Chinese medicine, TCM, alternative medicine, holistic medicine

science – facts, experimental results, exploration, truth, observation

**-ProQuest Topics**

Acupuncture AND Science
Acupuncture AND Medical Research

**-LC Subject Heading**

Alternative Medicine
Holistic Medicine
Acupuncture-Research
Acupuncture

**Web Source Retrieved from Searching the Open Internet**


Douglas Allchin, Ph.D., is a professor of biology at the University of Minnesota. He received his doctorate in history and philosophy of science from the
University of Chicago. I found this article of his while researching via Google. The terms I used were, science AND acupuncture while limiting the results by site:edu. I chose this paper because it closely tied into the topic of my research, “Where do science and acupuncture meet?” Douglas has many published articles, which lend him credibility, but I chose this one because it is free of charge to everyone. This paper highlighted many relevant questions that need to be contemplated when it comes to comparing the science of the East vs. the science of the West. The dialogue is not biased and where it doesn’t have a lot of answers, it pinpoints areas where students can take the research that has currently been done and design new appropriate studies to further explore this issue. This source balances out my other sources, which are mostly focused on either the principles of acupuncture or are focused on the research for specific diseases using acupuncture by taking a broad look at the subject and bringing forward the relevant questions that need to be addressed.

**Periodical Articles Retrieved from Subscription Databases**


This article I found via ProQuest is unique among my resources as it is written about a new hybrid form of Eastern and Western medicine. This new hybrid of medicine is called Systems Biology and is just emerging here in the United States. There is a new textbook, titled *The Textbook of Functional Medicine* that was published in 2006 in Gig Harbor, WA by the Institute of Functional Medicine. While Western medicine is known to compartmentalize and treat symptoms of disease, focusing on one anatomical organ, such as the heart or kidney, Eastern medicine is known to focus on the relationship between the organs, not the organs themselves. This new approach to medicine takes the specific precision and accuracy of Western science and applies it to the functional relationship between the organs that Eastern science traditionally focuses on. The author, who is a Western medical doctor, begins his article by telling of his pre-med experiences in Asia with Chinese doctors and how these experiences allowed him to enter Western medical school with a more balanced view of what medicine can be.
Books


I chose this book, which I found at The Seattle Library, as a resource because it addresses the very question I am researching which is to see where acupuncture and science meet. Its premise is that Western science and Eastern science have more in common than either side thinks. Richard Chin who is both a Western medical doctor and an Eastern acupuncturist, goes into detail lining up the ideologies behind each culture’s science, showing that the principles behind the two sciences, is really the same principal and that that both sides are in agreement. His aim with this book is to break down some of the cultural barriers so we as ‘beings’ can gain and learn from what each science knows. As Richard has a degree in both Eastern and Western medicine, he is in a unique place to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western science and find understanding between these two systems of science. This resource is not biased one way or the other but instead takes the stance that both Western and Eastern science are equal.

Self Evaluation

It was encouraging to finally be able to understand the scope of resources that are available to me through online research. Most classes, where a research paper is assigned, assume that you already know how to do research. I must have missed the actual class that taught this in high school because this class has really been valuable to me in clearing out uncertainties when it comes to the actual research for a project.

As this is my last quarter at NSCC, I will use the skills that I learned in this class to find what school I would like to attend next. Using “site:” has been especially helpful in parsing my results. My curiosity to explore the internet and my ability to satisfy it has grown with this class. Thank you.