

Acupuncture Is Backed by British Doctor

By Boyce Rensberger Dec. 4, 1971

Credit...The New York Times Archives

See the article in its original context from
December 4, 1971, Page 17 [Buy Reprints](#)

New York Times subscribers* enjoy full access to TimesMachine—view over 150 years of
New York Times journalism, as it originally appeared.

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

About the Archive

This is a digitized version of an article from The Times's print archive, before the start of online publication in 1996. To preserve these articles as they originally appeared, The Times does not alter, edit or update them.

Occasionally the digitization process introduces transcription errors or other problems; we are continuing to work to improve these archived versions.

A British doctor who, specializes in acupuncture stood before a packed auditorium at Brooklyn's Downstate Medical Center yesterday and explained how he, like the Chinese who originated the ancient healing art, sticks needles into his patients to cure them of dozens of afflictions.

Speaking in soft, measured tones, Dr. Felix Mann told some 300 rapt doctors, medical students, nurses and others how he had come to shift away from many of the conventional techniques of Western medicine that he learned in a British medical school.

He pointed to the knee of a diagrammed and dot - covered human body and recalled that years ago his girl friend had gone to an acupuncturist who stuck a needle into that spot on her knee, known as "Stomach 36," and cured her of appendicitis in 15 minutes.

"That impressed me," Dr. Mann said and the audience laughed approvingly. "I decided to look into acupuncture. That was 14 or 15 years ago and I still don't know how it works. I just know it works."

One of Few Trained

Dr. Mann, who has written five books on acupuncture and is one of only about 15 acupuncturists in England, had been invited to speak at Downstate by Dr. J. W. C. Fox, assistant professor of anesthesiology. Dr. Mann is one of the few English - speaking persons who have been trained in both Western medicine and acupuncture.

His audience was remarkably receptive. Though many of the medical men and women were plainly skeptical, their questions following the talk were good humored. Although one or two white - coated older men walked out of the auditorium shaking their heads, many of the younger faculty and students were fascinated by the lecture.

Dr. Mann said that although his early training in acupuncture included the traditional explanation that the needles altered the flow of a mysterious vital energy in the body, he has since given up that view. Now, he said, he believes that acupuncture works by stimulating nerves. Beyond this, he said, little is known.

In an interview before his talk, Dr. Mann said that the inability to explain how acupuncture worked prevented many Western doctors from paying it any attention.

Not How It Works

"Doctors are a funny breed," he said. "If they don't know how a thing works, they come to believe that it doesn't work. Now, I can't tell you how acupuncture works. All I know is that I practice it on my patients and an astonishing number get better."

Dr. Mann said that he and nine other British acupuncturists had analyzed the results of treating 1,000 patients suffering any of several dozen ailments, and found that about 44 per cent were cured or considerably improved, 29 per cent were moderately improved, and 27 per cent were unimproved.

There was no attempt to learn how many might have gotten better without any treatment.

The ailments were not among the more serious. They included such things as headache, constipation, bronchitis, cramps and nausea caused by pregnancy. In general, Dr. Mann said, acupuncture is at least partly successful only in diseases that are physiologically reversible, not those in which substantial tissue damage has already taken place.

Dr. Mann said he would not use acupuncture to treat infectious diseases or such major afflictions as cancer.

He predicted that the current revival of interest in acupuncture would lead to its gradual acceptance into Western medicine, not as a replacement but as a supplement to existing techniques. Dr. Mann estimated, that there were about a thousand acupuncturists in Western Europe, another thousand in the Soviet Union and over 300 in South America. The acupuncture technique that has attracted the greatest attention in the West is its use to kill the pain of surgery. Dr. Mann said that this technique is fairly new and not widely practiced outside China.

Dr. Fox, Dr. Mann's host at Downstate, said he hoped to learn whether acupuncture anesthesia can be successful in the United States.

Dr. Fox, who is learning the technique himself, said that if the study showed acupuncture to be useful, he would like to test, its anesthetic possibilities.