

Running head: TCM LEARNING AND PRACTICE STRATEGIES IN TREATING
TRAUMA

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LEARNING AND PRACTICE STRATEGIES OF
TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS IN TREATING TRAUMA

A Capstone Project Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the Doctoral Program of
Pacific College of Oriental Medicine

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine

by

Jay Bulloch, L.Ac

San Diego, 2014

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain knowledge about the learning and practice strategies of TCM practitioners with expertise in treating trauma related disorders and pathology. The study conducted an online survey of licensed acupuncturists and practitioners of TCM who have expertise in treating trauma related disorders and pathology. This survey aimed to gather data that may provide meaningful information and insight into how these conditions are treated with TCM in real-world clinical practice. Participants were recruited by posting an invitation on professional Internet groups and forums, and personal invitations were sent to qualified practitioners known by the author and discovered by web search. Any participant could also forward an invitation to participate to qualified colleagues. There were 42 complete responses and 20 partial responses to the survey.

The results show that there is a diverse range of diagnostic and treatment strategies used, that all patients are evaluated using comprehensive and detailed diagnostic methods, and all patients are treated as unique cases. No standardized methodology or protocols are uniformly applied to all patients being treated for trauma related disorders and pathology. Respondents also reported that the skill of the physician, their diagnostic ability and individualized treatment plan, has a significant impact on outcomes. Further, the active role played by the patient and physician is an inherent part of any treatment and is considered to be paramount to successful results. These findings suggest that the rigid structure of randomized double blind control trials are not flexible enough, and therefore not an appropriate research methodology, for accurately evaluating

the potential variations in treatment of trauma related disorders and pathology using a holistic, patient centered model such as TCM.

The conclusion is that models of practice and research that can accurately assess best practices of TCM need to be developed in order to create a more equitable knowledge base for the TCM profession and the field of trauma treatment alike. These models of practice and research would require collaboration between expert TCM practitioners and skilled researchers. To continue using inappropriate methodology such as randomized control trials, and thus reducing TCM to a minor branch of biomedicine is a mistake. This continued approach will result in spurious results and a deeply flawed and inaccurate database. As a result, the potential benefits that TCM may have to offer the current healthcare system, other healthcare providers, and patients alike could be lost. The development of comprehensive and holistic treatment programs, which can better address conditions as complex as trauma related disorders and pathology, are necessary. TCM may play an important role in such programs, but models of practice and the research methodology used to evaluate them both need to honor best practices of the medicine.