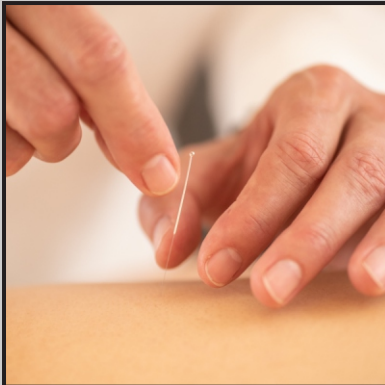


Sword and Spirit

The Journal of Itten Dojo

August 2022



— Why Budo? —

Regardless of the times in which you live, or the circumstances of your life, success largely depends on things you can control:

- **Building a foundation of strong relationships in a community of mutual support and achievement.**
- **Forging a disciplined and positive mindset.**
- **Enhancing your physical health and capabilities.**

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Chinese Medicine and the Utility of Acupuncture

Decades ago, I developed arthritis in the joint of my left big toe. Initially, I thought this condition might have been precipitated by the kicking into folded gym mats that we used to do in the old (and ill-equipped) karate class at the Harrisburg YMCA. But the orthopedic specialist said, no, it's just something that can happen. For most of the time, it's really been no big deal. Until recently, when there was a major flare-up that was intensely painful and seriously impacted my regular training.

I asked our chiropractor whether he thought acupuncture might be helpful, since there is now an acupuncturist sharing office space in his clinic. The chiropractor encouraged me to try some treatments, which turned out to be astonishingly successful. Astonishing, even though I'd utilized acupuncture many years ago for treating tendonitis in my elbow and knew that it could work very well.

My first appointment with Beth Mills was fascinating, as the physical treatment was accompanied by her detailed explanations of what she was doing along with discussion of the sensations I experienced as she worked. Application of most of the needles was imperceptible. There were several needles that, due to the specific locations, Ms. Mills knew would be painful and warned me to take a deep breath and exhale as she inserted the needles. She also applied moxibustion (described below), which I could not feel at all. Overall, from that initial session, I experienced some relief from the pain in my toe.

More significantly, I'd mentioned some ongoing pain in my lower back/hip, and Ms. Mills asked whether I would like to try cupping (also described below). Well, that technique provided an immediate and complete fix, and the next day I was doing solo, aerial breakfalls.

So far, I've completed three treatments and am assessing the results at this point, prior to making another appointment. Basically, my toe now feels normal. The arthritis is still there, obviously, but the pain is gone.



Most interestingly, at my third appointment, Ms. Mills applied another course of moxibustion. I told her, “Okay. Now that *really* hurts!”

She responded, “That’s good!”

I was like, “No! It’s not!”

But Ms. Mills explained: “Yes, it is. What I applied today was just a fraction of what I applied in the first and second sessions, but you couldn’t feel anything, either time.”

When I inquired what that meant, Ms. Mills continued: “Previously, that area of your foot was so cold it absorbed the heat without you being able to feel it. Now, as that area is coming back into proper balance, you can feel the heat right away.”



Beth Mills, a gifted practitioner of Chinese medicine.

After that experience, I asked Ms. Mills whether she’d be interested in being interviewed for *Sword and Spirit*. Happily, she agreed.

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S&S: Thank you, Ms. Mills, for accepting the invitation for this interview. The topic of traditional Chinese medicine, and acupuncture in particular, is something with which many people involved in martial arts are not personally familiar. First question, before we dive in, is there a proper form of address, or title, for a Chinese medicine practitioner?

B. Mills: Some practitioners have their doctorates, so they will be called “Doctor.” For me, I have a Master’s of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine. No special title for the Master’s level.

S&S: Recognizing that the answer to this question could be a book in itself, what are the primary differences in the traditional Chinese and Western approaches to medicine?

B. Mills: The Chinese Medicine paradigm is completely different from Western Medicine. It is a “complete medical system,” in that it contains medical theory, diagnosis, herbal medicine, and treatments that are centuries old. It is what I call “circular” and I would call Western medicine “linear.”

The theory of Chinese medicine is fundamentally based on Daoist thought and nature, and is documented in classical medical texts that are still used today. In fact, Chinese medicine has always incorporated new thoughts and theory as it evolved and has embraced Western medicine. For example, a Chinese medicine oncologist will include scans and lab results while forming his diagnosis according to Chinese medicine principles.

There are also records of very early surgeries done by famous Chinese physicians, including Hua Tuo, who lived and practiced in the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries.

Western medicine is a much newer medicine, developed in Europe starting about 200–300 years ago.



S&S: What led to your interest in Chinese medicine?

B. Mills: I had been a patient for many years and was inspired by the improvement in my own health and life.

I had been working as an administrator in a variety of medical clinics. When I worked in an oncology office, I realized I wanted to be able to help people with Chinese medicine. I just knew it would help cancer patients get through their treatments and be healthier after their chemotherapy and/or radiation was done.

S&S: How did you undertake your formal training, and where did you train?

B. Mills: I enrolled at Oregon College of Oriental Medicine in Portland, Oregon. I studied there for about five years and received my diploma and license to practice in 2015.

S&S: For what type of certification did your training prepare you?

B. Mills: I am a Diplomate of Oriental Medicine (Dipl OM) with the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM), and I am a Licensed Acupuncturist (LAc) and Board-Certified Herbalist. I maintain my Oregon license. In Pennsylvania specifically my license is Licensed Oriental Medicine practitioner, (LOM). This allows me to practice acupuncture and prescribe herbal medicine.

S&S: Does Pennsylvania require licensing for Chinese medicine/acupuncture practitioners?

B. Mills: Yes, it does.

S&S: Would you please list the health services your practice includes, and provide a brief description of each?

B. Mills: Of course.

• **Acupuncture.** I give acupuncture treatments, which is inserting fine, solid filiform needles, that are thinner than a hair, into different points on the body

according to what the patient would like to treat. I have had good results treating women's health issues, fertility, cancer (alleviates side effects of conventional treatments), digestion and/or gastrointestinal concerns, allergies, abdominal pain, tinnitus, eye pain, jaw pain and TMD/TMJ. Acupuncture can be used for really any health concern.

• **Cupping.** Cupping is a myofascial release technique. It helps relax tissues much like a massage, although it pulls tissues up to relax them instead of pushing into the tissues. It is a kind of "reverse massage." It can alleviate pain, help congested lungs and sinuses, and contribute to overall wellness by increasing circulation.

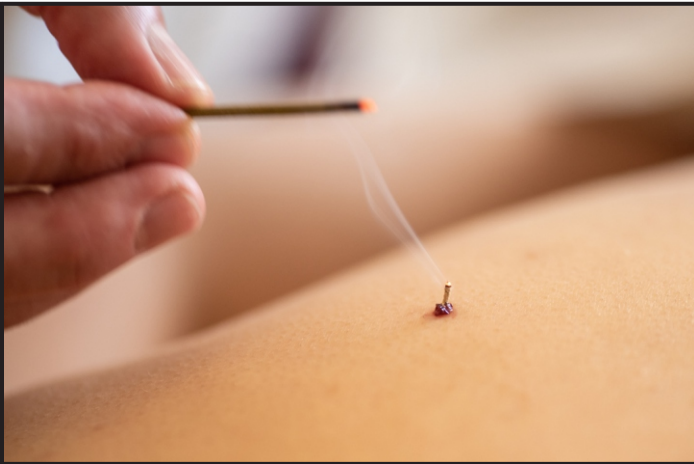


Cupping creates a strong, suction effect.



- **Herbal Medicine.** I prescribe herbal medicine, which is given in different forms. One is dried raw herbs, which the patient boils up into a tea and drinks over the course of treatment. Another is granules, which is a powdered form of herbs that is mixed into a tea with hot water. Both of these forms of herbs can be custom made just for the patient. Another form of herbs is patents, which are tablets, capsules, or teapills that are easy to take with a cup of water. Lastly there are tinctures, which are either taken a dropperful under the tongue, or a dropperful in a cup of tea or water.

- **Moxibustion.** During a treatment I may want to do Moxa, or moxibustion, which is an external warming herbal technique. Moxa involves burning the herb mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) in a variety of techniques on or near different points on the body.



An application of moxibustion.

- **Bodywork.** During acupuncture treatments I may do some bodywork, which can include *Tuina* (Chinese massage), Shiatsu, Reiki, and Cranial-sacral. It could also be cupping or *Gua Sha*, both of which are considered myofascial release techniques.

- **Diet recommendations.** Sometimes a patient needs help tuning up their diet, and nutritional recommendations are part of my licensure. There are many ways to use “food as medicine,” and they work well. Chinese medicine has a long history of using food as medicine.

- **Lifestyle recommendations.** Sometimes I will give a person stretches or Qigong to help them be more healthy.

S&S: What is the theory underlying the practice of acupuncture, and by what mechanism does acupuncture work?

B. Mills: If you think of the body as a natural landscape, the acupuncture meridians or channels are the rivers and streams that run through that landscape. The acupuncture points are located on places of the body where you can tap into that channel, or access that river flow very easily. We could say these rivers are “rivers of Qi” or rivers of life’s vital forces.

Along with this concept are the Five Elements of Chinese medicine, which are fire, earth, metal, water, and wood. These natural elements are a part of nature and are also a part of the natural landscape of our bodies. The acupuncture primary channels are all associated with these elements and there are also acupuncture points associated with these elements on each channel.

So, you have “rivers of Qi,” and the five elements along these rivers that can block flow, dry up the flow, or maybe there’s too much flow in some areas.

For example, you may have a person that has what we would call an “excess water element” that we feel may be causing her symptoms. We can choose acupuncture points to help the body nudge that element back into balance. We can also give that patient herbs to help keep that element in balance between treatments.

What acupuncture really does is help the body itself get back into harmony or balance.

How does it work? There is ongoing research into the topic as we speak. Research studies have not isolated any one mechanism by which acupuncture works, but it has shed light on *many* ways that acupuncture *might* work.

My personal opinion is that acupuncture taps into the electrical system in the body and creates a more balanced electrical flow, which in turn affects other systems in the body. Interestingly, some research on acupuncture has shown that it prompts the body to release “feel good” chemicals, such as dopamine and endorphins.



S&S: What is a typical course of acupuncture (and/or other modality) treatment?

B. Mills: A baseline course of treatments is six treatments. This is based on Western research studies, so I often tell a patient to try at least six treatments. Of course, everyone is very different. One person might feel much better after one or two treatments, where another person would need ongoing care for chronic problems. Sometimes I will tell a patient to try 12 treatments or six months of weekly treatments.

It is also better to have the first few treatments closer together, say, two times a week. Acupuncture works best based on the number of treatments and cumulatively how long has the person been continuously having acupuncture.

S&S: In your experience, what patient circumstances or conditions have been most responsive to acupuncture treatment?

B. Mills: Acupuncture is really good for pain, including headaches and migraines. It's also great for anxiety and depression.

S&S: Any circumstances or conditions that have tended to be least responsive?

B. Mills: Neuropathy can be very challenging. I always try to get neuropathy patients to take herbs as well.

S&S: Have you trained in martial arts?

B. Mills: I have done and still practice Qigong and Taiji.

S&S: What do you see as the connections between or complementary aspects of traditional, Chinese medicine and martial arts?

B. Mills: Well, in many martial arts lineages there is a healing lineage that goes along with it. So, for instance, the martial arts studio would have some clinical rooms in the back of the studio, and students would learn the martial art and the ways to heal injuries that one might sustain while practicing that martial art.

I think the arts are intimately intertwined, because in martial arts training you are working with Qi flow and



harnessing that Qi flow (including the mind's Qi), and in healing, acupuncture, and herbs, you are accessing the Qi flow.

S&S: If someone is interested in an appointment for acupuncture or other therapeutic services, how best should they contact you?

B. Mills: Yes, thank you. They can call or text me at 717-516-1080 or email me at bluemtnacu@gmail.com.

You can even schedule online yourself, at:

<https://bluemountainacupuncture.janeapp.com>

S&S: Is there anything else you would like to mention?

B. Mills: Yes, thank you! I am teaching a beginning class about acupuncture starting on Saturday, August 20th, from 12:30–1:30 p.m., and it will be the first of nine classes. It's a drop-in class at the clinic, which is located at 5521 Carlisle Pike, Suite B, Mechanicsburg, PA 17050, and is \$25.

S&S: Thank you, very much.

B. Mills: Thank you! 🌐

Robert Wolfe, chief instructor of Itten Dojo, began martial arts training in 1975 while attending Bucknell University, where he earned a degree in Japanese Studies. Mr. Wolfe has taught since 1985, and founded Itten Dojo in 1992. His articles on martial arts have been featured in publications such as *The Bujin*, *Budo Shinbun*, the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*, *Bugeisha*, *Aikido Today Magazine*, *Inside Karate*, *Martial Arts Training*, and *Martial Arts Professional*.



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