

First Sino–American Military Acupuncture Exchange

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A GROUP OF 5 UNITED STATES MILITARY acupuncture physicians, including myself, and 2 non-acupuncture military physicians, traveled to Beijing, China, to exchange information on military acupuncture with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the School of Acupuncture, Moxibustion, and Tuina, at the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine. This was the first acupuncture exchange between the two militaries. This outstanding event was the result of my negotiations over the past 2 years and the immense efforts of Professors Jiang Zhu, MD(China), and Liang-Xiao Ma, MD(China).

Our visit to the Affiliated Hospital of the Air Force Aviation Medical Research Institute, on Beiwa Road in the Haidian District of Beijing, was initially characterized by mild trepidation; however, this soon dissipated. As we entered through the hospital gates, the military guards stood to attention and saluted. The welcoming committee consisted of General Minghui Yang, MD(China), the director of the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) department, of the PLA General Hospital and Senior Colonel Yongchang Luo, MD(China), chief of the Air Medical Institute. A large entourage of military hospital personnel stood to attention in formation and saluted as we disembarked from our vehicle. Numerous military and civilian news media took photographs. A large banner was displayed on the outside of the hospital building and in the magnificently decorated conference room welcoming the "First Sino-American Military Acupuncture Exchange." Indeed, we did feel welcomed!

I presented a lecture on Battlefield Acupuncture and Captain Robert Koffman, MD, USN, the deputy director for

clinical operations at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence, in Bethesda, MD, delivered a briefing about his affiliation. Ms. Guan Ling, a PLA contributor to our Special Edition of Acupuncture in the Military, focused on "Application of Acupuncture and Moxibustion in the PLA." A second presentation by Ms. Xiaojie Huang discussed "The Application of Acupuncture and Moxibustion in Aviation Medicine." We also listened to a lecture on obesity with the English translation of the title meaning, "Shrinking Stomach, Opening Lock." A form of acupuncture called "violence acupuncture," which could be used on the battlefield, was also discussed.

Most important were the informal break sessions that fostered a genuine atmosphere of respect, collegiality, and camaraderie. We participated in a hospital tour of the integrative TCM and Western medicine clinics. A lunch buffet in the Aviators' Dining Room was a real treat that also permitted informal discussions.

As we prepared to depart and exchanged military salutes, we all looked toward the future with the hope of a Second Sino–American Military Acupuncture Meeting to be held in America.

We are all children of our acupuncture ancestors, despite our military and political ideologies. Acupuncture has filtered down for thousands of years and, besides healing, unites our spirits regardless of our origins.

—Richard C. Niemtzw, MD, PhD, MPH
Editor-in-Chief

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