

Avian and Exotic Animal Acupuncture

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ABSTRACT: Acupuncture has been used successfully in a number of wildlife species. It may be used to increase immune system function in immune-compromised or infected animals. Acupuncture may also be used to increase appetite and normalize digestion and absorption. Finally, many forms of trauma, particularly of the central and peripheral nervous system, may heal more rapidly with acupuncture as an adjunctive treatment.

Physiological Aspects of Avian Patients

- Yang Creatures
- Airborne vs Yin Earth
- Hollow bones vs Yin substantial bones
- High average body temperature
- Rapid cardiovascular and metabolic systems
- Dry tongue, oropharynx and skin

Dealing with Yang Animals

- Be calm
- Use techniques with little addition of energy to the birds' bodies
- Avoid too Yang and drying treatments
- Avoid too Yin and moistening treatments
- Respect natural history of each species


Traditional Chinese Points not found on Mammals

- Gu Duan- cranial to acetabulum, used for wing ptosis
- Bei Ji- 3 points on Du (GV) channel two cranial to and one caudal to T1
- Note: Experienced western avian practitioners caution that these poultry points may be less effective in parrots!

Traditional Chinese Points found on Mammals

- Named by:
- Human channel
- Then "Avian"
- Followed by TCVM name
- Fei Tian (soar sky) is homologous with Zhong Fu (LU1), so it is called
- LU1, Avian Fei Tian, Soar Sky

Transpositional Points also found on Mammals (IVAS)

- Same homologous anatomy
 - Similar indications and actions of human points
 - Hegu, LI 4- found on dorsal face of the wing in alular angle
 - Disperses Wind, tonifies Qi, opens LI channel
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Non-TCVM, Non-IVAS Avian AP Points

- Seven Shu points on Bladder channel
- BL 12 Avian Fei Shu/Fei Men (LU)
 - Caudal to T1
- BL 13 Avian Wei Shu (ST)
 - Caudal to T2
- BL 14 Avian Pi Shu (SP/Pancreas)
 - Caudal to T3
- BL 15 Avian Xiao Chang Shu (SI)
 - Caudal to T4
- BL 16 Avian Gan Shu (LIV)
 - Caudal to T5
- BL 17 Avian Da Chang Shu (LI)
 - Caudal to T6

Avian Acupuncture Techniques


- Dry Needle
 - Korean hand needles
 - or 0.20x13 mm or 0.16x13 mm
 - or Serin needle with clipped handle
 - Find De Qi or leave in situ 10-20 min
 - Most important! Using the smallest, lightest needle is safest and least irritating
 - Aquapuncture
 - full-strength or saline-diluted B12
 - Helpful for fractious animals
 - Beware of tissue laceration!
- Implants
 - 24 carat gold bead or wire
- Laser Therapy
 - Useful due to thin integument
 - Refraction may limit accuracy
- Electroacupuncture
 - Useful but beware of over stimulation
 - CNS, PNS trauma in HBC birds
 - All wild birds need their heads covered during treatment to reduce stress

Avian Disharmonies Amenable to AP Treatment

- Infectious Disease (bacterial, viral, or fungal)
 - Wind, Heat, Cold, Damp, Dry
 - Useful Acupuncture Points
 - Wind?
 - LI 4, GB 20, BL 10, BL 12, LIV 3
 - Heat?
 - LI 4, LI 11, GV 14, ST 36
 - Useful Acupuncture Points
 - Cold?
 - GV 14, GV 4, GV 3 and CV 4, 6 with Moxa
 - Damp?
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- LI 11, ST 36, SP 6, SP 9, Wei Shu, Pi Shu
- Dry?
 - SP 6, KI 3, Shen Shu, Pi Shu, Fei Shu

Avian Disharmonies Amenable to AP Treatment

- Crop Binding
 - May be Stagnation (if proventricular)
 - Or Rebellious Stomach Qi (vomiting)
 - Useful Points?
 - LI 11, ST 36
 - CV 17, CV 12, CV 6, Proventriculus Shu
 - Liver (Gan) Shu, SP 6
 - Egg Binding, Treatment
 - SP 6 Tonifies and regulates Spleen, Liver and Kidney
 - ST 36 Master point of abdomen, tonify SP and ST, tonify Qi
 - GV 20 Lifts Yang Qi and calms the Shen
 - PC 6 Calms Shen, opens Chong Mai
 - CV 5 Mu Point for TH, regulate water pathways
 - Aberrant Feather Grooming
 - Many potential predisposing Western medical causes have been identified
 - Most are “psychogenic” in origin
 - Psychogenic means “generated by the mind” or Shen disturbance
 - Why are Caged Birds Shen disturbed?
 - Shen Disturbance due to:
 - Constrained flight behavior
 - Flight is in large, visually and spatially complex three dimensional space
 - Obstacles abound and food search commonly complex
 - Shen Disturbance due to
 - Flight activates Zhong Fu, LU 1
 - Lung disharmonies lead to Excess Grief
 - Birds fly for food, mates, predator avoidance and probably..... FUN!
 - Husbandry changes are essential
 - Baby bird-rearing practices may be potential cause of adult problems
 - Intelligent creatures need a social and stimulating environment
 - Toys alone will not suffice, would they be enough for you?
 - Treatment Principles: Calm Shen, Clear Heat, Relieve Stagnation
 - ST 36 Tonifies SP/ST, tonify Qi
 - LI 4 Expels Wind and Heat, Releases the Exterior
 - LI 11 Clears Heat, resolves Damp
 - PC 6 Calms Shen
 - HT 7 “Shen Men” calms the Shen
 - GV 24 Calms Shen, cools the Mind
 - LU 7 Release emotions, relieves grief
 - LU 1 Resolve grief and anguish
 - Musculoskeletal Disorders
 - Qi Stagnation, Principles of treatment?
 - Invigorate Qi
 - Resolve Stagnation
 - Qi Stagnation, acupuncture points?
 - LIV 3, LI 4
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- ST 36, LI 10
- anatomy-based

Yin and Yang of Species Energy

- Remember that the Balance of Yin and Yang is species-dependent
- Avian species are Yang compared to most mammals
- Reptile species are Yin compared to most mammals
- Amphibian species are Yin compared to both reptiles and mammals


General Energetic Characteristics of Mammals

- Domestic Exotics: Lagomorphs, Rodents, Porcine, Camelidae and Wildlife: (Ungulates, Procyonidae, Mustelids, Rodents and Lagomorphs)
- Mammalian energetic characteristics may be surmised by their diet and activity levels

General Energetic Characteristics of Reptiles

- Snakes, lizards, and turtles are most commonly seen by the compassionate wildlife veterinarian
- So many exotic reptiles exist that it is important to have an atlas available to identify each species
- Some of these may be imported exotics and others maybe endemic Wildlife species
- Crawling close to the earth and sometimes in water, having low metabolic rates and being mostly ectothermic (relatively Yang-deficient), reptiles are moderately Yin beings
- This viewpoint attempts to temper our “mammalist” worldview in which mammals are the average and deviations from that mammalian norm is unusual
- We would be wise to respect reptilian seasonal and diurnal variations as well as lifestyle, rather than treat them as constantly Yang-deficient
- For example, although heat may be added to a reptilian environment to increase immune system function, heat may also increase the rate at which a pathogenic factor increases in a reptilian body

General Energetic Characteristics of Amphibians

- The practitioner will see both exotic and Wildlife species
 - Accurate identification is important, with many atlases containing pertinent information as to lifestyle and diet of each species
 - Husbandry errors are the genesis of most disease in exotic animals
 - Being so close to the earth (and water), obligate ectotherms, amphibians are very Yin in energy quality
 - So Yin, in fact, that they need to return to water to breed
 - This natural Yin energy is not to be overcome with strong Yang treatments
 - Almost all Amphibian treatments will utilize moist environments and Heat and Dry will only rarely and cautiously be added to treatment protocols
 - I find that electroacupuncture is contraindicated in all but the most debilitating neurological disharmonies
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General Treatment Principles

- Knowledge of species energetics and TCVM pathology is critical for correct and harm-free treatment
- Unfortunately, two primary keys to TCVM diagnosis, Pulse and Tongue, may be difficult to ascertain in exotics
- Psychological factors may be very important
 - group species often heal poorly in isolation
 - wild species need “hides” and very little human visual, olfactory, and auditory contact
- Subjective stress may be difficult to quantify objectively, but we must remember that such stress probably impinges upon virtually every TCVM disharmony


Disharmonies Amenable to TX

- Cold disorders are generally treated with heat, and hot disorders with cold
- Foods and herbs may be used for long term regulation
- Species-specific Husbandry is critical for life-long positive benefit
- Epidermal and dermal trauma that has led to open lesions is best treated with topical herbs and acupuncture
- Surrounding difficult to heal lesions with needles may be helpful (“circling the dragon”)
- Underlying husbandry conditions that may have led to such trauma must be addressed (e.g. strong heat sources that may be accidentally contacted must be removed)

Disharmonies Amenable to TX: Trauma

- Most wounds that I treat heal amazingly well with topical Aloe vera gel
- The gel creates a moist environment which nourishes epidermal cells, and has antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, and pro-epitheliogenic properties
- The aqueous base readily dissolves in water and can be groomed off tissues and ingested with beneficial effects.

Case Example: Zang-Fu Disharmony

- A fox squirrel, *Sciurus niger*, (threatened native species in Florida) presented as an uncoordinated and weak roadside animal brought by a panicking client
 - It had a mildly curved/bent spine and appeared stiff during passive motion examination
 - Vital signs were depressed and the animal was 7-10% dehydrated
 - Rehydration with SQ LRS and one day of cage rest led to no change
 - Surrogate pulse diagnosis indicated Kidney deficiency, both Yin and Yang
 - Bladder 23 bilaterally as well as GV 4 was dry-needled
 - The animal “flew” out of the cage the following morning, was forcibly captured, and released with vigor where found
 - This was obviously an elderly squirrel and his prognosis was not great
 - Aged mammals are most likely to show severe Kidney Yang Deficiency
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Where are the Points?

- Guan Yuan Shu (BL 21, Wei Shu) is a very important empirical point and 5-Element Cosmology suggests that Post-Heaven Qi is the main source of Qi for most Zang-Fu organs (Ferguson, 2001)
- In many cases of disharmony in any system in most species, BL 21 will be an important part of a treatment protocol
- In most species it will also be rather easy to find and commonly caudal to the last rib
- Local Points: There is accumulating evidence that acupuncture leads to many local neurogenic and vasoactive effects
- Choose the correct, relatively non-traumatic needle size and needle around any lesion except cancer and see what you get!
- This can be used on joint lesions like we would use our local points. It can also be used to help chronic nonhealing wounds when used to surround the dragon

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