

## Reintroducing Dr. Bear

by Wada Masako

It has been more than 16 years since I attended my first seminar with Iwashina Anryu Sensei (a.k.a. Dr. Bear) in Santa Cruz, California. I was still in acupuncture school, finishing up my degree. If one of Dr. Bear's students, Chikurin Takae, hadn't asked me to join them, I would never have been introduced to him and his very rare technique. Dr. Bear, whose specialty is rooted in classical acupuncture treatment, has more than 40 years experience. He studied Toyohari for 13 years under Kodo Fukushima Sensei, who founded this approach, and also under Yagi Soho Sensei. He currently practices in Morioka, in northern Japan.

Iwashina Sensei received the name "Dr. Bear" back in 1988 when a group of native Americans visited Japan. They were participating in a protest against the development of nuclear energy, marching from Hiroshima to Hororobe, Hokkaido. When the group passed by Morioka, Sensei volunteered to "smooth their journey" to Hokkaido. During their stay in Morioka, one of the members experienced a severe asthmatic attack. He'd been suffering from chronic asthma since his exposure to the infamous Agent Orange during his service in the Vietnam War. With Iwashina Sensei's magical treatment, he recovered very quickly. This person, who happened to be a leader of the group, was deeply impressed by Sensei's gift, and on the night of a full moon bestowed upon Iwashina Sensei the name "Dr. Bear." Since then, Dr. Bear has been invited by the Navajo and Diné peoples to sun dances held in Arizona, where he has volunteered to give acupuncture treatment to participants. And he has accompanied fellow acupuncturists, giving volunteer treatments to residents on the Indian reservations. According to Dr. Bear, the Diné people's sun dance is usually held in the middle of nowhere, a very remote desert location with no access to water or electricity. Sun dance participants can fall ill, not only from poisonous insects and snakes, but also severe weather conditions. Many cannot afford medical treatment, so they come to visit Dr. Bear's treatment tent. And when he helps them get better, they are very much appreciative, often exclaiming, "It's a miracle!" and bringing more patients to him. "Bears" are animals that have earned special significance for native Americans. They have the gentleness of mother bears but also the fierceness of protecting their cubs with all their life. Iwashina Sensei said he's trying to live up to the name given by his friends. His volunteer activities on the reservations have been chronicled in the past by Salvador Cefalu, L.Ac (see *NAJOM*, Volume 8, Number 23, November, 2001).

In May 2015, Dr. Bear published *The Book of Dr. Bear*. It shares his 40 years of clinical experience and his understanding of the classics: *Su Wen*, *Ling Shu*, and *Nan Jing*. The second edition is set to be published in the spring, 2016. The book, currently published only in English, reveals Dr. Bear's distinctive humor; even a layperson will find it very entertaining and might develop an interest in acupuncture. More information is available at [www.thebookofdrbear.com](http://www.thebookofdrbear.com). The website also provides information about Dr. Bear's upcoming US seminars.

### Let's Find Live Acupoints

If asked, "what is unique about your work?" Dr. Bear will playfully answer in the Morioka dialect: "non-insertive needling style and check method, *da-be-na!*" (I apologize that I don't have an English translation for the Morioka-dialect word *da-be-na*. Trust me, it makes you giggle.)

Yes, it's true. Dr. Bear's number one characteristic is the "Check Method." As David Toon, L.Ac., mentioned in recent issue of *NAJOM* (Vol. 22, No. 65, November 2015), a practitioner can determine whether to use a tonifying, sedating, or even method by using the tip of his or her fingers. The practitioner employs a tonification method when he observes positive physical changes in a patient's body with the (practitioner's) thumb or middle finger. On the other hand, a sedation method is employed if positive changes are observed with the (practitioner's) index or ring finger. For the even method, we use a little finger – which is neither tonification nor sedation. The focus of the even method is to move or circulate the qi of a patient's body. Since Mr. Toon has already described how to determine whether to use tonification/sedation/even methods, here I'd like to simply point out what kind of positive physical signs are observed in a patient's body when we locate the right point, i.e., when we get an "okay sign."

#### Positive signs include:

- The skin becomes smooth and a luster appears;
- Unevenness on the skin surface disappears;
- Tension disappears and the muscles relax;
- The patient's breathing slows down and becomes deeper;
- The patient says he or she feels good.

In Dr. Bear's Check method, a practitioner needles only the acupoints for which he obtained "okay" signs. He doesn't necessarily needle a set of acupoints on the basis of theory. Sometimes, a practitioner may encounter mysterious dynamics of the human body in which he doesn't get "okay"

signs in accordance with acupuncture theory. The advantage of this Check method is that it gives a practitioner a tool to verify the potential accuracy of the tonification/sedation/even methods he is about to perform. Readers may not be able to get it by just reading this article, but in a regular class setting, anybody can learn this Check method. Once you get hang of it, I can guarantee the treatment will become more fun. Dr. Bear is gifted with a super-sensitive touch – unique to a visually impaired acupuncturist – that those of us who can see may not have. So, my daily mantra is "learning is mimicking" (in Japanese, *manabu-ha-maneru*) as Kodo Fukushima Sensei used to say to his students.

#### Flow of Treatment

- Dr. Bear's treatment flow is as follows:
- Shiraku – bloodletting;
- Treatment of abnormal bowel movement;
- Acupuncture on the location of disease;
- Fundamental treatment;
- Special Points (including moxibustion).

#### Shiraku

If *sairaku* or *ketsuraku* (vascular spiders or spider angiomas) are found, we must perform shiraku for the patient, any chief complaints and any preconditions (even though the patient is taking pharmaceutical drugs). Often times, the points are located at the jing-well points of the hands and feet. Dr. Bear uses a lancing device made by Telmo Medi-Safe Fine Touch (available in Japan). This lancing device causes no pain when puncturing the skin. Shiraku treatment is very effective for treating conditions of blood stagnation and so-called peripheral vascular disorder.

#### Treatment for Bowel Movement

Dr. Bear says when a practitioner finds a patient with abnormal bowel movement during history taking, he should prioritize the regulation of bowel movements, regardless of the chief complaint or the reason for the acupuncture visit. When abnormal bowel movement is corrected, mysteriously, but not surprisingly, the patient's chief complaint often disappears. Clinically, it's noteworthy that the improvement of bowel movements contributes to natural healing of the body.

#### What's the Fundamental Treatment

The fundamental treatment refers to eight sets of acupoints that Dr. Bear uses. They are: CV-12, CV-4 or CV-6, GV-12, GV-4, Yaoyang bilaterally, BL-39 and BL-59. The use of this group of acupoints can neither be found in the classic textbooks

nor in the modern acupuncture textbooks. When Dr. Bear was still a novice and attending several study groups, he noticed there was a common group of acupoints used by instructors and experienced acupuncturists. These eight acupoints were compiled by a combination of those senior acupuncturists' favorite acupoints and Dr. Bear's choice. According to Dr. Bear, the "irresistible charm" of these eight acupoints is that when they are used, a patient gets better as if "a wilted flower that is revived by fresh water." He recognizes their powerful influence on human body. Needless to say, one must check all eight acupoints with his fingers for the tonification/sedation/even methods before needling.

Next, I would like to discuss the type of needles used in Dr. Bear's method.



FIG 1: Needles used by Dr. Bear over the years.  
FROM LEFT: Seirin 30mm (for reference only), gold and silver #30 gauge, teishin, gold and silver, silver Coil #50 gauge (current)

Dr. Bear started using gold and silver No. 50 gauge needles a few years ago. The three-cun needle has a silver coil wrapped around its head. This extra long needle is Dr. Bear's design patent inspired by his master, Yagi Soho Sensei. Dr. Bear explains that an advantage of the No. 50 needle is that qi flows only in one direction. The old teishin needles have a round tip on one end and a sharp tip on the other and with this design, Dr. Bear explains, qi flows in both directions. It may be okay as is, but Dr. Bear thinks it's inconvenient because qi leaks a little toward the sedation side (sharp tip) when he's tonifying. The way you handle the No. 50 needle is same as the teishin needles. When tonifying, the oshide hand closes an acupoint at the end. During sedation, the oshide hand doesn't close the acupoint. Dr. Bear says, with No. 50 needles, he feels a lot stronger qi sensation with greater clinical efficiency. He describes this qi sensation in more detail in *The Book of Dr. Bear*. This is a great textbook for someone who's just started learning contact needling. He encourages readers to read this book and apply the technique disclosed in it. The book also talks about how to make sensitive hands ideal for cultivating the qi sensation. As a bonus, Dr. Bear shares his secret

## Bulletin Board

April 2016

### Master Kobayashi Sensei Presents:

#### Three-day Shakuju Therapy Seminar

With 10 Japanese teachers to assist participants in the afternoon sessions

**Dates:** Friday-Sunday April 29, 30, and May 1

**Place:** Kabuki Hotel, San Francisco, California

**Contact:** Tisha Mallon (415) 378-3039

**Information and registration:**

www.tishamallon.com

**Translation:** by Stephen Brown, L.Ac.

May 2016

#### Shudo Style Meridian Therapy with Murata Morihiko & Stephen Brown

**Dates:** May 20-22, 2016

**Fee:** \$400

Hosted by High Desert Hari Society Santa Fe, NM

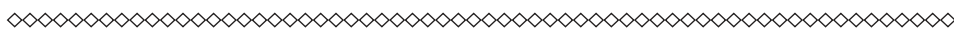
**Info and registration:** www.highdeserthari.org

June 2016

#### Hands-on Acupuncture with Jeffrey Dann

Just returned from teaching in China, Jeffrey Dann is accepting applications for a one-year small-group intensive apprenticeship in hands-on acupuncture. Learn structural acupuncture, including SeiTai Koshi Balancing, Meridian therapy, Sotai movement therapy, Sawada-style moxibustion, osteopathic hara-viscera work, plus the amalgam of 40+ years of experience. Learn enhanced palpation and osteopathic "listening" techniques for channel diagnostics and point selection.

**Dates:** Starting June 2016, one weekend a month over 15 months. Unique and deep training one on one; class limit six persons. Applicants may email



for creating hands like the *Tatsumi Geisha*, famous geisha girls in Japan, with their "polished" and "sophisticated" appearance.

*The Book of Dr. Bear* also covers topics such as: Internal Injuries, False Wind, Shigo Treatment, Luo and Micro Luo treatment. He also shares his understanding of classic books such as the *Su Wen* and *Ling Shu*. His book is not only for novices, but also for experienced practitioners. It is filled with his insight and various treatment ideas. I'm

a personal summary of your work and interests and what you would want out of this apprenticeship. Email: jeffreydann@gmail.com

October 2016

#### Advanced Certificate Program in Traditional Japanese Acupuncture – New NYC Program

**Dates:** From October 2016-September 2017 \*one weekend per month (Fri-Sun)

**Location:** Tri-State College of Acupuncture: 80 8th Avenue New York, NY 10011

**Information:** Dennis Moseman@dennis.moseman@tsca.edu or 212.242.2692.

November 2016

#### Japan 7– In Touch Acupuncture in Tokyo & Shikoku Nov. 6-13, 2016

Another Japan Seminar is being offered at the Goto College & Shikoku Medical College. This one-of-a-kind Japanese acupuncture training is being held in Tokyo and Shikoku.

**Instructors:** Miyakawa Kouya, Yamada Katsuhiko, Funamizu Takahiro, Ohasa Yoko and Okada Akizo

**Organizers:** Stephen Brown, Jeffrey Dann, and Heather Suzuki

**Information:** See flier for Japan 7 by going to Facebook Japan 7, or

www.Traditional-Japanese-Acupuncture.net or contact Jeffrey Dann, Intouchjapanseminar@gmail.com with Japan 7 in subject line.

#### Help Moxafrica Japan Project

November 2-22, 2016

Merlin Young and Yuki Itaya assisted by Junji Mizutani will hold lectures and workshops around Japan. Events in this "Help Moxafrica Japan Project" will be held in Tokyo, Hamamatsu, Nagoya, Nagahama (near Mt. Ibuki), Kyoto, Osaka, and Fukuoka. NAJOM members in Japan are invited to participate in this fundraising project.

**For more information:** please contact Yuki Itaya: yuki.moxafrica@gmail.com

sure readers will appreciate Dr. Bear's humorous explanation and his effort to make acupuncture treatment more fun.

*Wada Masako, L.Ac., practices in Austin, Texas as an acupuncturist, health educator, and Qi-Gong facilitator at the Northwest Counseling & Wellness Center, an outpatient addiction and detox facility.*