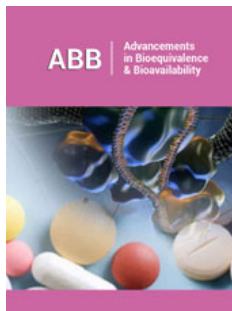


A Close Look at the Application of the Yin-Yang-Based Acupoint Pairs

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ISSN: 2640-9275



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Submission: 📅 February 20, 2019

Published: 📅 March 20, 2019

Volume 2 - Issue 4

How to cite this article: Tong Zheng Hong. A Close Look at the Application of the Yin-Yang-Based Acupoint Pairs. *Advancements in Bioequivalence & Bioavailability*. 2019; 2(4): 000544-000544. DOI: [10.31031/ABB.2019.02.000544](https://doi.org/10.31031/ABB.2019.02.000544).

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Abstract

Yin-Yang is the unique concept that serves as the foundations for the developments of acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine theories, such as the Five Elements, and Qi and Blood. Aimed at the balance of Yin-Yang, acupoint pairs consisting of acupoints on the Yin-Yang meridians, the locations classified Yin or Yang, and the Five-Shu acupoints are presented and discussed. However, it deserves more research to understand whether or not acupoint pairs can outperform the other protocols.

Keywords: Yin-yang; Five elements theory; Five-shu acupoints

Introduction

The safety and effectiveness of acupuncture have been verified with scientific evidence and acupuncture is highly recommended by the WHO for the pain management, which has been recognized in the Western healthcare systems, though it is at present viewed and classified as the complementary or alternative medicine [1]. Acupuncture, as part of the traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), has not only been viewed as one of the major healthcare systems in the Chinese communities, such as Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, for more than two thousand years, but also has gained acceptance and popular in the Asian countries at the present time in Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Thailand [1].

The philosophical and abstract concepts like Yin-Yang, the Five Elements theory, Qi, Blood, Wei-Qi-Yin-Blood sequence, and pattern identification based on the observation of the nature have been used as the foundations to establish the whole systems of acupuncture and the TCM, even though they are difficult to understand for clinical practice. The ancient literature of acupoint pairs developed by the acupuncture masters represents the clinical application of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements theory, which highlights the essence of acupuncture theories. This study aims to explore some acupoint pairs for understanding the application of the rules of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements theory in the acupuncture and TCM theories.

Typical examples

Yin-Yang and the Five Elements are unique and the keys of the TCM theories for many centuries, which absolutely distinguishes the TCM from the Western medicine. Based on the concept of Yin-Yang, a disease is understood to be the imbalance of Yin and Yang which bears the characteristics shown in Figure 1 [2,3].


<u>Yin</u>		<u>Yang</u>
Material		Function
Blood		Qi
Zang		Fu
Yin meridian		Yang meridian

Figure 1: Characteristics of Yin-Yang.

It is believed and required that an experienced acupuncturist must count on the four skills to get the information for identifying Patterns based on Ying-Yang balance for diagnosis, which is critical

to the successful treatment outcomes. The typical acupoint pair in the acupuncture literature showing the application of Ying-Yang is the Four Gates that consists of LV3 and LI4 in Table 1.

Table 1: Yin and Yang of the four gates.

Acupoints	Yin/Yang meridians	Actions
LV3	Yin	Nourishes Liver Yin to regulate Liver qi for subduing Liver Yang to calm the Shen.
LI4	Yang	Expels Wind to release the exterior for nourishing Qi to stop pain.

As shown in Table 1, either of the acupoints in this pair has the characteristic of Yin or Yang. It shows in the literature that this acupoint pair has been for long commonly used to promote the circulation of Qi (Yang) and to hold Blood (Yin) throughout the body. On the other hand, it is proved to be effective for treating sub-health [4], verifying the effectiveness of Yin-Yang balance. Both LV3 and LI4 are the Yuan-source acupoints classified in the Five-shu acupoints, to which the quotation “Treating the Zang organ with Yuan-source acupoint” in the Huang-Di-Nei-Jing (Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic) can apply. It deserves attention that the Five Elements can only apply to the Five-shu acupoints among the acupoints on the twelve regular meridians, the Four command acupoints, the Hui

meeting acupoints, and the Four Seas acupoints.

The Five Shu acupoint system represents the clinical application of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements theory. Each of the five specific acupoints is categorized as Jing-well, Ying-spring, Shu-stream, Jing-river, and He-sea, to which the Five Elements correspond. It is noted that the five Zang organs have five Shu acupoints and the six Fu organs have six Shu acupoints of the twelve regular meridians. A Shu acupoint on either the Yin meridian or the Yang meridian can collaborate with a Shu acupoint on the either the Yin meridian or the Yang meridian, which is the typical representation of Yin-Yang as in Table 2.

Table 2: A Shu acupoint on Yin meridian combines with a Shu acupoint on Yang meridian.

Shu acupoint on Yin meridian	Acupoint paired on yang meridian	Indication	Action
LU 11	LI 1	Acute cough	Clear Lung heat

In order to treat cough through clearing Heat in the Lung, both LU11 and LI1 are Well acupoints used at the same time. In this pair, LU11 classified as Yin acts to clear Heat to benefit the throat, while LI1 is used to reduce swelling and alleviate pain caused by Heat. The most critical notion that “Feng (Wind), the beginner of the illness” is also presented in Huang-Di-Nei-Jing, which suggests that Wind is the major cause of illnesses with its pernicious influence. Blood mobilization and Qi regulation need to be considered at a time because Blood stasis and impeded Qi can result in Blood Xu (deficiency of Blood) that can finally generate Wind.

The pair for Heart Blood deficiency consisting of LV3 and ST36 in Table 3 also represents the application of Yin-Yang. Blood classified as Yin is produced with the stimulation at ST36 while Yin is reinforced by the promotion of Qi belonging to Yang in this pair [4]. Different from the pair in Table 2, Yin and Yang are distinguished with the acupoint locations. ST36 is located on the leg, which is viewed as Yang, and one fingerbreadth lateral to the anterior crest of the tibia. Contrast to ST36, LV3 is classified as Yin because it is on the dorsum of the foot and in the hollow distal to the junction of the first and second metatarsal bones.

Table 3: Features of LV3 and ST36.

Acupoint	Yin/Yang	Actions
LV3	Yin	Regulates Liver Qi Nourishes Liver Yin to subdue Liver Yang for calming the Shen.
ST36	Yang	Nourishes Qi and Blood to strengthen Wei qi and raise Yang for pain relief.

Discussion

Acupoint pairs are collected in the Zhen-Jiu-Da-Cheng (The Great Compendium of Acupuncture and Moxibustion) which provides the comprehensive understanding of acupuncture. Yin-Yang is the top principle in the TCM and acupuncture, which serves as the foundations of the Five Elements theory. In addition, both Yin-Yang and the Five Elements are the cores of the acupuncture and the TCM theories and seen as the guides for the diagnosis and the treatment. It is suggested that the understanding and accurate interpretation of the acupuncture and TCM theories are required for the best clinical outcomes [5].

Through the examples discussed above, it is clear that acupoint pairs can consist of either meridians or acupoints classified as Yin or Yang. However, it should be noted with the pair presented in Table 3 in clinical practice that the relationship between Yin and Yang is unfixed. On the other hand, the pair in Table 3 distinguishes itself from the general characteristics of Yin-Yang in Figure with the locations of the two acupoints and highlights the unfixed characteristic of Yin-Yang. Blood classified as Yin can nourish Qi while Qi can move Blood. The concept that Blood is the mother of Qi and Qi is the commander of Blood indicates that one is inconceivable without the other because the circulation of Qi and Blood in the body should be constant and cannot be disrupted [6].

Furthermore, the examples presented above show Blood and Qi are vital and each acupoint pair is aimed to balance Qi and Blood.

Conclusion

In spite of the ancient usage as a therapeutic method to treat illnesses and acupuncture has been proved in some scientific research to be effective for pain relief, inflammatory conditions, etc., acupuncture is facing the evidence-based challenge at the present time. Acupoint pairs may be the optimal approach in terms of cost and time in clinical practice to balance Ying-Yang. However, whether or not there could be more effective options based on the Yin-Yang theory for the better outcomes deserves more evidence-based research.

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