

Acupuncture Needles

The needle, a fundamental tool used by Chinese medicine practitioners. According to history, the first needles were made from various materials such stone, fish bone and bamboo. As China became more developed, the construction of acupuncture needles began to evolve as well. The first acupuncture needles that were discovered dated 600 A.D. these needles were made from bronze, tin, gold, and silver. The production of needles eventually turned to steel, which allowed for needles to become thinner. Needles now come in a wide variety of lengths and diameters and the majority of them are made from stainless steel. The main needles used are straight with a coiled top, which was established to create a handle and allowing for easier insertion and removal. The three-edged needle has a round handle and a triangular head. The dermal needle, which is often referred to as a plum-blossom or seven-star needle, has seven short needles that are attached to a handle. The intradermal needle, which comes in 2 types, is a short needle that gets put into the skin for longer periods of time. There are about 9 types of needles that have been developed, each of which are prescribed for specific diseases and conditions. Today's needles are mass produced and sold worldwide. They tout all kinds of extra features from plastic handles to special coatings, when it all comes down to the basics, for all of its evolution the needle is still just a shaft with a sharp, pointed tip that you need knowledge of how to use if you want to avoid simply irritating someone.

The development of needles did not just stop at the level of production, but included how the needle was used. Oral history from China indicates that the first needles made from stone were used only to press on points and were not inserted into the skin. Later history suggests that

early needles were used to produce bleeding at the points. Today needles are inserted at various depths from superficial pricking to produce bleeding to inches deep within the skin. Needle lengths start at 0.3cm while some can reach 15cm in length. 0.75-2.5cm is the most common depth of needle insertion.

Knowing where to poke a person and how deep to poke a person is not where this art ends. There evolved different methods of inserting and specific angles that should be used to prevent injury, as well as a plethora of things to do with the needle. Manipulating the needle to get the desired results involves moving the needle in a particular manner after it has been inserted into the skin. The primary techniques involve lifting and thrusting, and twirling or rotating. There is an assortment of techniques used for the promotion of qi. Treatments may consist of tonification or sedation of qi. The outcome of which is dependant upon how the needle is inserted into and withdrawn from the patient. Things such as speed of insertion and withdrawal, timing placement of the needle with the breathing, and placing the direction the needle is facing are just a few ways of affecting the outcome.

While poking someone with a needle may seem like a simple concept at first, it took centuries to produce the multitude of methods used to approach treatment. It takes time and practice to master the skills needed to insert and manipulate a needle in the proper fashion. Those who wish to practice the craft, have to become adept at choosing the best tool to perform their art and how to best use that tool to get the desired results.

Information sources:

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<http://www.bookrags.com/sciences/sciencehistory/acupuncture-woi.html>

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