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# Research on the Role of Pressing Hand in the Clinical Practice of Acupuncture

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on exploring the importance of the pressing hand in acupuncture. Through the study of the relevant literature about pressing hand and the writers' clinical experience, the effects of pressing hand were summed up and analyzed from three stages which are the effects of pressing hand before, during and after a acupuncture treatment process. Ahead of the acupuncture treatment, pressing hand helps to examine and sense acupoints and pressing hand can locate acupoints precisely; during acupuncture process, pressing hand helps to insert and withdraw needles and assists to apply the reinforcing and reducing manipulations; after withdrawing needles, pressing hand can organize and regulate human body and help to exert other reinforcing and reducing manipulations. The result shows that the pressing hand is a key role running through the whole procedure of the acupuncture treatment and the acupuncture manipulation process. Pressing hand also runs through from the diagnosis of diseases to the treatment. Pressing hand has great clinical significance in guiding treatment. At the same time, the pressing hand to some degree has its own advantages on the diagnosis of diseases and the treatment. Besides that, pressing hand is also helpful to enhance the practice level of acupuncture.

**Keywords:** The Pressing Hand, Reinforcing and Reducing Manipulations, Acupuncture Manipulation

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## 1. The Pressing Hand in Acupuncture

Nan Jing Seventy-eight difficulties mentioned that the one who comprehends acupuncture well values the left hand, but the others attach much importance to the right hand. That means the one who masters acupuncture manipulation well is good at applying his left hand which can press the acupoint. But the one who can't manipulate needle well is biased towards his right hand which can hold needle. [1] The so-called "acupuncture" is not only the process of inserting needle or applying reinforcing-reducing manipulation, but the whole process of the practise of acupuncture. This paper focuses on the role of pressing hand before, during and after acupuncture in the clinical practise of acupuncture.

## 2. The Role of Pressing Hand before Acupuncture

### 2.1. Examine the Acupoint

Before acupuncture, doctors should make the objective judgement on the general condition of patients and preliminarily examine the acupoint which will be acupunctured.

#### 2.1.1. The Meditation

Meditation means that doctor should guide patients to be quiet, remove straying thoughts and control their emotions. [2] Song to Elucidate Mysteries records that doctor should ensure the patients who will receive acupuncture therapy are in meditation. During acupuncture, only patients stay in meditation can qi flows. If the patients can't be quiet, they can't have acupuncture therapy. Only patients stay quiet can

they have acupuncture therapy. This fully illustrates that patients should stay calm and keep quiet before acupuncture. Doctor uses pressing hand to touch and press muscle, tendons and bones of patients which can eliminate patients' fear to acupuncture and guides patients to become concentrate. Through inspection, auscultation and olfaction, inquiry and pulse-taking and palpation, doctor will have a right differentiation of syndrome which can guide pressing hand to locate acupoints and apply the right acupuncture manipulation.

### **2.1.2. Examine Along Meridian and Disperse Nutrient Qi and Defensive Qi**

The overall concept of TCM guides the acupuncture therapy. Needling acupoints roots in needling meridian. The ancients said rather missing the acupoints than missing the meridian. [3] Before acupuncture, pressing hand touches and examines meridian which is also the process of transferring meridian qi and stimulating qi and blood meridian. At the same time, in order to protect the healthy qi during acupuncture, doctor rubs and presses the partial acupoints which can stimulate nutrient qi and disperse defensive qi. This called needling yingfen but not injuring weifen. Yang Jizhou referred in Zhenjiu Dacheng that the procedure of needling yingfen but not injuring weifen: To not injure defensive qi, insert needle after left hand pressing and pinching acupoints which can disperse defensive qi. The procedure of needling weifen but not injuring yingfen: pinch the acupoints and apply horizontal insertion of needling to not injure yingfen and xuefen. This shows pressing hand plays a vital role in the clinical practise of acupuncture. [4]

### **2.1.3. Sense the Acupoint**

Before acupuncture, doctor is bound to take pulse. This emphasizes the importance of pulse diagnosis before acupuncture. By learning, the writer believes that acupoint diagnosis plays an important role in the clinical practise of acupuncture. In common with the property of medicine, acupoint has the property of acupoint. During acupuncture, pressing hand can sense the partial temperature of acupoint, the state of qi and blood and the state of skin and muscle. Then, doctor can choose the right manipulation and therapy. Acupoint not only is the location of acupuncture, but also can make diagnosis by its change. [5] Miraculous Pivot -Cijie Zhenxie records that before acupuncture doctor should sense the deficiency or excess of meridian by touching, following, pressing and flipping. And doctor carefully observes the change the acupoint, then chooses the right acupuncture manipulation. This shows that doctor distinguishes the deficiency or excess of meridian by the actual feeling of pressing hand and chooses the matching reinforcing-reducing manipulation. Plain Questions- Bazhengshenminglun mentions that when climate is warm, the circulation of blood flows smoothly and defensive qi goes up to the surface of body. So the blood is easy to circulate and qi tends to flow. When climate is cold, the circulation of blood flows slowly and defensive qi goes down to the deeper layer of body. This tells that the clinical practise of acupuncture is affected by temperature. When temperature is higher, the transmission of sensation along meridian

becomes more obvious. When temperature is lower, the transmission of sensation along meridian becomes weaker. [6] So before acupuncture, pressing hand can sense the partial temperature of skin which is good for the clinical practise of acupuncture.

## **2.2. Locate the Acupoint**

### **2.2.1. Locate the Acupoint and Concentrate**

Locating the acupoint precisely is the basis of acupuncture curative effect. To locate the acupoint, doctor should press along meridian, push hard and scratch firmly. [7] Locating the acupoint precisely is the first step of acupuncture. Because the characteristic of acupoint has a crucial role in the clinical practise of acupuncture, locating the acupoint precisely is the basis of acupuncture curative effect. Therefore, Prof. Li Zhidao not only verifies the controversial acupoints, but also innovates the method of locating acupoints. He proposes the method of locating acupoints from the area to one point which is pressing along meridian, pushing hard and scratching firmly. [8] Nan Jing Seventy-eight difficulties records that before acupuncture doctor uses left hand to press the acupoint which will be needed. Doctor presses, flips and scratches the acupoint to promote arrival of qi. When qi arrives, the feeling of pressing hand is like pulse beating. And the direction of inserting needle is same with the qi. Pressing hand is like the scout before acupuncture. Besides locating the acupoint precisely, pressing hand can make doctor concentrate on acupuncture.

### **2.2.2. Stimulate and Transfer Meridian Qi**

Plain Questions- Lihezhenxielun mentions that before acupuncture doctor should touch and press the acupoint, then knead the muscle around the acupoint, and flip the acupoint to make collaterals distend. Doctor applies the left hand to press the acupoint to not leak the healthy qi. Stimulating and transferring meridian qi is the vital basis of the arrival of qi and the reinforcing-reducing manipulation. Classified Canon-acupuncture category-Jingmai Yingtiandihuxi Fenbuxie notes that when doctor flips the acupoint, patients will focus on the acupoint and the qi around the acupoint will flow. So, collaterals around the acupoint become distend. Nanjing Benyi refers that the aim of flipping the acupoint and making collaterals distend is to promote the arrival of qi. Only after stimulating meridian qi and sensing the arrival of qi can doctor insert needle. The direction of inserting needle is same with the qi which tends to get the needle sensations. [9]

## **3. The Role of Pressing Hand During Acupuncture**

### **3.1. Participate in Acupuncture**

Miraculous Pivot- Jiuzhen Shieryuan which concisely introduces the coordination of pressing hand and needle-holding hand states that the main function of right hand is to insert needle and the main function of left hand is to locate and press the acupoint. [10] If the acupoint is near the

artery, doctor should use thumb of pressing hand to press artery and avoid needling the radial artery during acupuncture. For example, Taiyuan of lung meridian should apply finger press insertion. If there is a flat bone and little muscle beneath the acupoint, doctor should pinch the skin to insert needle. For example, Yintang of governor meridian should apply pinching needle insertion. When doctor operates Tiaokou through Chengshan, he usually chooses the holding-needle insertion. The examples above all confirm the importance of the coordination of pressing hand and needle-holding hand.

### **3.2. The Reinforcing-Reducing Manipulation of Acupuncture**

#### **3.2.1. Assist in Promoting the Circulation of Qi**

The arrival of qi is the precondition for the reinforcing-reducing manipulation. Yang Jizhou, the acupuncture master of ming dynasty, wrote in Compendium of Acupuncture and Moxibustion that if qi doesn't arrive after acupuncture, doctor should use fingers press along the meridian which the acupoint belongs to. Press around the acupoint to make qi and blood circulate. Doctor can feel tight around needle which means qi arrives. These all illustrate that pressing hand can promote the arrival of qi during the reinforcing-reducing manipulation of acupuncture. Pressing hand is also the vital basis of the reinforcing-reducing manipulation of acupuncture.

#### **3.2.2. Assist the Reinforcing-Reducing Manipulation of Acupuncture and Improve the Curative Effect**

Miraculous Pivot- Jiuzhen Shieryuan writes that doctor applies acupuncture to treat patients. If the patient has deficient syndrome, doctor should use reinforcing method. If the patient has excessive syndrome, doctor should apply reducing method. If there is blood stasis in patient, doctor should promote blood circulation and remove blood stasis. If there is too much pathogen in patient, doctor should weaken the pathogen. Miraculous Pivot- Maijing records the excess should reduce and the insufficiency should reinforce. The general principle of reinforcing-reducing manipulation of acupuncture is reinforcing the insufficiency and reducing the excess. The reinforcing-reducing manipulation of acupuncture runs through the process of acupuncture from inserting to withdrawing the needle. [11] The single reinforcing-reducing manipulations include twisting reinforcing-reducing method, lifting and thrusting reinforcing-reducing method, puncturing along or against reinforcing-reducing method, slow-rapid reinforcing-reducing method, open-close reinforcing-reducing method and so on. The multiple reinforcing-reducing manipulations contain heat-producing needling, cool producing needling, Ziwu Daojiu needling, dragon-tiger warring needling and so on. The coordination of pressing hand plays the vital role in both single and multiple reinforcing-reducing manipulations.

According the experience of multiple reinforcing-reducing manipulations of Professor Zheng Kuishan,[5] pressing hand plays the vital role. After the arrival of qi, the manipulation of heat-producing needling needs to increase the pressure of left

hand, twists forward for 3-5 times with thumb, lifts and thrusts for 3-5 times and repeats the former process for once. The direction of needle is heading towards the needling sensation. Then, twist the needle and keep the sensation of qi for 1min to make the feeling of heaviness around the needle and the sensation of heat. In the same way, the manipulation of cool producing needling also needs the coordination of pressing hand.

## **4. The Role of Pressing Hand After Acupuncture**

### **4.1. The Reinforcing-Reducing Manipulation After Acupuncture**

TCM syndromes have deficient syndrome and excess syndrome. Therapeutic methods have reinforcing method and reducing method. [12] Plain Questions- Tongping Xushilun said excess syndrome means that there is too much pathogen in patients. Deficient syndrome means that patients is lack of essence. Reinforcing method includes all methods which can stimulate the healthy qi in body and bring the one with poor function back to normal. For example, frail patients tend to catch a cold. Needling Zusanli frequently can increase immunity and prevent colds. This is so-called reinforcing method. Reducing method includes all the methods that can disperse the pathogen and bring the one with hyperfunction back to balance. For example, the one who has the acute gastroenteritis should have strong stimulation to strengthen the body resistance and eliminate pathogenic factors. This is so-called reducing method. Plain Questions- Zhenjie records that reinforcing method asks doctor to insert needle slowly, lift needle beneath subcutis quickly, withdraw the needle slowly and press the pinhole quickly. Reducing method asks doctor to insert needle quickly, lift needle beneath subcutis slowly, withdraw the needle quickly and press the pinhole slowly. During slow-rapid reinforcing-reducing manipulation, the speed of pressing the pinhole decides the the result of reinforcing-reducing manipulation. Plain Questions-Cizhilun documents that if doctor acupunctures the one who has excess syndrome, his pressing hand should open the pinholes. If doctor acupunctures the one who has deficient syndrome, his pressing hand should close pinholes. This means that the reducing method of open-close reinforcing-reducing manipulation should withdraw needle after enlarging the pinholes and not press the pinholes. The reinforcing method should not enlarge the pinholes and do press the pinholes. [13] Most of excess syndrome and heat syndrome should apply reducing method. Most of deficient syndrome and cold syndrome should apply reinforcing method. The manipulation of the pressing hand, opening and closing the pinholes, will disperse or preserve meridian qi which can have reinforcing and reducing effect during acupuncture and improve the clinical practise of acupuncture.

## 4.2. Organize and Rehabilitate after Acupuncture

### 4.2.1. Assist to Withdraw Needle and Relieve the Pain

The reinforcing-reducing acupuncture manipulation is a presentation of strength. The stimulation mainly includes intensity of stimulus, accumulated time, the frequency, the speed and so on. [14] When doctor applies the lifting and thrusting manipulation or twisting manipulation, the muscle fibre may twine around the needle which can make patients feel hurt during withdrawing needle. Pressing hand can touch and press around acupoint to relax the tension of muscle and withdraw needle smoothly.

### 4.2.2. Fix Skin and Prevent from Bleeding

After manipulation, pressing hand should fix flabby skin, then withdraw the needle. This can prevent the skin from going after needle which can cause ecchymoma or pain. Except reducing manipulation, the other manipulations should press pinholes after withdrawing needle to not disperse essence.

### 4.2.3. Press Along Meridian and Eliminate Adverse Needle Sensation

Because of the tension of patients or the strong needle sensation after heavy manipulation, there is the feelings of sore, numb, swelling, pain and so on. Then, pressing hand should press gently, slowly and steadily around the acupoint or along the meridian. Or doctor can help patients exercise their limbs. Both can promote the circulation of qi and blood and eliminate the uncomfortable feeling of patients.

## 5. Conclusion

The clinical acupuncture manipulation is a process which is accomplished by the coordination of two hands. The role of pressing hand before acupuncture is sensing and locating the acupoint. The role of pressing hand during acupuncture is to assist inserting needle and applying the reinforcing-reducing manipulation of acupuncture. The role of pressing hand after acupuncture is to assist applying reinforcing-reducing acupuncture manipulation during withdrawing needle and rehabilitating after acupuncture. We should attach more importance on the coordination of pressing hand to make full use of pressing hand in the clinical practise of acupuncture. This is very helpful to guide the clinical treatment and improve the level of clinical treatment.

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