

Weight Loss with an “Ancient Chinese Twist”

I remember the first time I took Chinese herbs. One of my patients told me “You look tired – Here take these herbs” and handed me a bagful of different colored packages. It hurt, but it was true, I was building a business, working long hours and feeling a bit drained, so I listened and took them home to use that night. One was a peach tea that tasted sort of like the Snapple I had been drinking earlier that day, one was a “not so good tasting” dark green liquid which I took with an OJ chaser and the third was a powder that I mixed up with OJ, water and soy milk to make a citrus smoothie. Not bad I thought, for Chinese herbs... And then something amazing happened. I felt full!

I had never felt full before in my life. I knew when to stop eating in order to not gain weight; I knew all kinds of tricks like drinking water before a meal and getting up and walking away from the table. I had eliminated all those “bad carbohydrates” from my diet and lived at the gym – and I ended up thin and tired. I tried dexatrim (I may be dating myself – does any body else out there remember that?) and tried many a yo-yo diet. I could go on and on.... But I had never before felt this feeling of being satisfied. I loved it! I then proceeded to talk myself out of taking the herbs – too expensive, too much work, etc... and promptly got sick, went back on them – stopped and got sick again, repeated it a third time and then I got the message. Six months later I dropped 20 pounds without changing anything else in my life. I even began to eat more without gaining weight like I used to. I had struggled with my weight since I went through puberty and I was amazed at how these “little packages of herbs” had changed my life. That was my door into the world of Chinese Medicine and I’ve never looked back.

Weight Management is quite a difficult complex thing for some of us, and not even an issue for others. Just recently “Language has been removed from the Medicare Coverage Issues Manual stating that obesity is not an illness.... The medical science will now determine whether we provide coverage for the treatments that reduce complications and improve quality of life for the millions of Medicare beneficiaries with obesity.”¹ Being overweight is now officially a disease. “And as a first step, we expect to convene our Medicare Coverage Advisory Committee in the fall to evaluate the evidence on the various surgical procedures used in treating obesity.”² There has to be a better way.

Acupuncture for Weight Loss hit the press in 2003 when Reuters, CNN and others reported of successful weight loss clinics in China. Chinese Medicine theory, traditionally hold that overweight people have imbalanced digestive systems. By stimulating the digestive system through acupuncture and herbs, it becomes more balanced and efficient, thus nutrition is more bio-available and the person feels fuller. Other theories are that acupuncture mainly helps reduce appetite and improve metabolism.³

¹ CMS (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services) Press office, Press release 6/10/04, <http://cms.hhs.gov/ncdr/searchdisplay.asp?id=57>.

² Ibid.

³ FlorCruz, Jaime, Tackling Asias Growing Waistline, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/HEALTH/11/02/china.obesity>

A slow increase in Obesity in China had lead to a new specialty – weight loss. A professor at a Traditional Chinese Medicine College in China states that treatments for weight reduction have been practiced, studied and refined over the past 5 years⁴. While an exact comparison between the US and China is difficult, in China the numbers may be close to 10-13% overweight adults, as compared to 64% for the US, but with their lifestyles and economic changes this number is beginning to rise⁵. In Beijing, the capital, students eagerly enjoy down their Kentucky Fried Chicken, McDonalds, Coca-Cola, Pepsi and pop tarts. These foods have slowly replaced the previous hot spots with traditional Chinese snacks found in places like Grandma’s Dumpling House⁶. The obesity rate among primary and middle school students has risen to 18 %, from 10% in 1991, the state Xinhua news agency said recently, citing a survey from the Beijing Center for Disease Control and Prevention.⁷

So what kind of treatments are offered in these clinics in China? Acupuncture, on the body and/or the ear, herbal supplements and exercise that’s not overly taxing⁸. These are the primary treatment modalities that are used, but Acupuncture is the pillar of their weight loss strategy. How successful are they in losing weight? Currently there are no published research studies in peer – reviewed journals, only success stories emanating from the clinic. One source states “On this modest program – patients are said to lose between 22 and 33 pounds per month⁹.” Huge weight losses of up to 242 pounds are boasted. In China, they say that 4 of 5 patients lose weight¹⁰.

I was fortunate to have been trained by a colleague that studied in China learning these treatments. We are now proud and excited to offer these treatments as well as other supporting treatments for weight loss at our acupuncture clinic in Los Angeles. I will also be joining the trek to Zhejiang and Tianjin this May to further my study and will be working with researchers at a major university to evaluate the efficacy of these protocols. Imagine finding solid evidence that there is a treatment for obesity that has relatively few side effects. It is exciting to see where this can go.

The unique weight loss program we are offering here in Los Angeles at the Oriental Med Spa is a synergy based on the treatment protocol currently used in China¹¹ and nutrition for weight loss taught to physicians¹². It is a gradual reduction method and

⁴ Christian MK Weight Loss Reduction in China, Acupuncture Today, Sept 2004, <http://www.acupuncturetoday.comarchives2004/sep/09christian.html>

⁵ <http://www.billingsgazette.com/index.php.display=rednews/2004/02/04/build/health/80-chinesewaistline.inc>

⁶ Christian MK Weight Loss Reduction in China, Acupuncture Today, Sept 2004, <http://www.acupuncturetoday.comarchives2004/sep/09christian.html>

⁷ <http://www.billingsgazette.com/index.php.display=rednews/2004/02/04/build/health/80-chinesewaistline.inc>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Christian MK Weight Loss Reduction in China, Acupuncture Today, Sept 2004, <http://www.acupuncturetoday.comarchives2004/sep/09christian.html>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Second Annual Integrative Medicine Symposium: Translating Science into Clinical Practice, UCLA Collaborative Centers for Integrative Medicine Practical Multidisciplinary Teaching of Weight Management

includes Oriental Medicine Diagnosis, a series of eight Acupuncture for Weight Loss Treatments, Auricular acupuncture (ear seeds) and herbal supplements. Acupuncture and herbs are used primarily to strengthen the digestive system so it becomes more efficient. The food you eat is better assimilated and you feel full more quickly with less cravings. Breathing exercises are also a vital part of our program. For additional support we also provide Chinese Nutrition diet analysis, Eating plans, Lifestyle Changes Support, RejuvaQi Qi Gong Exercises, Slim & Toned IR BodyWrap and AromaWraps for weight loss. Each program is tailored and individualized for the patient's unique situation. In China they say that 4 of 5 patients lose weight. Only time will tell here in the West¹³.

Searches of medical literature show that all of the following are important, lifestyle choices such as daily exercise, smart diet choices, and dealing with your "inner eating demons." Others are important but haven't gotten quite as much press – proper breathing, body balance & flexibility, and constitution. Let's face it we all come in as a unique individual with our own DNA, personality profile and favorite foods. First is the decision to lose weight, next is the right support.

This is where I believe Chinese Medicine and acupuncture are powerful tools, to help us find our own individual paths to healthy living. It is a slow gradual reduction method. It takes time as the body rebalances. It worked for me, it has worked for others and if you are seriously looking for support for your weight loss, we'd love to share it with you. For more information, contact Debra Clydesdale LAc DNBAO QME President of the Oriental Med SPA at 323-655-9800, www.OrientalMedSPA.com.

¹³ Christian MK Weight Loss Reduction in China, Acupuncture Today, Sept 2004, <http://www.acupuncturetoday.com/archives2004/sep/09christian.html>