Ling Shu Acupuncture

Nine Kinds of Needle

This chapter is based on <Su Wen Chapter 54> and <Ling Shu> Chapter 1, 7 and 78.

The purpose of this Chapter is to discuss the origination, nomenclature, length, shape and application of the nine kinds of needle.

【素問針解篇第十四】

帝曰：余聞九針上應天地四時陰陽，願聞其方，今可傳於後人，以為常乎。岐伯曰：夫一天二地三人四時五音六律七星八風九野，身形亦應之。針各有所宜，故曰九針。人皮應天，人肉應地，人脈應人，人筋應時，人聲應音，人陰陽合氣應律，人齒面目應星，人出人氣應風，人九竅三百六十五經應野。故一針皮，二針肉，三針脈，四針筋，五針骨，六針調陰陽，七針益精，八針除風，九針通九竅，除三百六十經病，此謂諸方各主所生也。

1-1 The Origination of the Nine Kinds of Needle

【Su Wen Chapter 54】

Huangdi asked: I have heard that nine kinds of needle correspond with the heaven, earth, four seasons, yin and yang, etc.; can you tell me all about it?

Qibo answered: The various portions of the body correspond to heaven, earth, four seasons, yin and yang, etc. Skin corresponds to heaven; muscle to earth; vessel to man; tendon to season; voice to tone; yin and yang to rhythm; tooth, face and eye to stars; respiration to the wind; nine orifices and three hundred sixty-five collaterals to the nine regions. The nine kinds of needle correspond to these also. The first kind of needle corresponds to heaven; the second to earth; the third to man; the fourth to season; the fifth to tone; the sixth to rhythm; the seventh to star; the eighth to the wind; the ninth to the nine regions of China (in ancient time).

The applications of the nine kinds of needle suit different diseases, which occur at the various portions of the body. The application of the first kind of needle is to treat diseases of the skin; the second is to treat diseases of the muscle; the third needle is to treat diseases of the vessel; the fourth needle is to treat diseases of the tendon; the fifth needle is to treat diseases of the bone; the sixth needle is to regulate the yin-yang; the seventh needle is to reinforce the essence; the eighth needle is to dispel the wind; the ninth needle is to treat diseases related with the nine orifices and three hundred sixty-five collaterals.

Table 5-1-1 The nine needles correspond with the heaven, earth, yin/yang etc; and with the various portions of the body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heaven</th>
<th>Earth</th>
<th>Man</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Rhythm</th>
<th>Star</th>
<th>Wind</th>
<th>Nine regions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skin</td>
<td>Muscle</td>
<td>Vessel</td>
<td>Tendon</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Yin/Yang</td>
<td>Tooth, Face, Eye</td>
<td>Respiration</td>
<td>Nine orifices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st needle</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>Eighth</td>
<td>Ninth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1-2 Name, Length, Shape and Application of the Nine Kinds of Needles

【靈樞九針十二原第一】

九針之名，各不同形：一曰鍼針，長一寸六分：二曰鍼針，長一寸六分：三曰鍼針，長三寸半：四曰鍼針，長一寸六分：五曰鍼針，長四寸，廣二分半：六曰鍼針，長三寸六分：七曰鍼針，長七寸：九曰鍼針，長四寸。鍼者，頭大末銳，主治陽氣：骨針者，針如弓形，鍼分間，不得傷肌肉，以瀉分氣；鍼針者，鍼如粟之銳，主按脈勿陷，以致其氣；鍼針者，刃三隅，以發瘡瘍；鍼針者，末如鍼鍼，以取大脈；鍼針者，針如毛，且長且銳，中身微大，以取熱氣；鍼針者，尖如蚊虻，靜以徐徐，以取久留，正氣因之，專邪併去。出針而飲，以取痛痹：長針者，鍼鍼身薄，可以取痛痹：大針者，尖如砥，其鍼鍼身，以瀉經絡之水也。九針畢矣。

針各有所宜，各不同形，各任其所為。

【Ling Shu Chapter 1】

Each of the nine needles has a name and a distinct length and shape.

The first one is called “Chanzhen”, its length is 1 Cun 6 Fen (1 Cun = 10 Fen).
The second is called “Zhuazhen”; its length is 1 Cun 6 Fen. The third one is called “Tzhen”; its length is 3.5 Cun. The fourth one is called “Fengzhen”; its length is 1 Cun 6 Fen. The fifth one is called “Piizhen”; its length is 4 Cun, and its width is 2.5 Fen. The sixth one is called “Huiizhen”; its length is 1 Cun 6 Fen. The seventh one is called “Haozhen”; its length is 3 Cun 6 Fen. The eighth one is called “Changzhen”; its length is 7 Cun. The ninth one is called “Dazhen”; its length is 4 Cun.

The “Chanzhen” has a big head with a sharp tip; it is used to clear the heat from the skin.
The “Zhuazhen” has a round body and head like egg; it is used to treat the disease of the muscle by rubbing the muscle.
The “Tzhen” has a sharp tip like grain of millet; it is used to treat deficiency of the vessel by pressing on the vessel but not penetrating it.
The “Fengzheng” has three cutting edges; it is used to prick and bleed for chronic diseases. The “Pizheng” has a sharp tip like a sword; it is used to prick the pustule. The “Yuanlizhen” has a sharp tip like hair, and its body is bit larger; it is used to treat sudden onset disease. The “Haozheng” has a tip like a mosquito’s beak; it is used to reinforce the Qi by retaining the needle and painful-bi syndrome. The “Changzheng” has a sharp tip and a thin body; it is used to treat the disease that is located in the deep layer. The “Dazhen” has a tip like a stick and slightly round; it is used to remove the retaining water from the joint. These are the nine kinds of needle.

The different length and shape of nine needles correspond with the different applications of the needle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nine needles</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Indication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chanzhen</td>
<td>A big head with a sharp tip</td>
<td>Clear the heat from the skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuanzheng</td>
<td>Around body &amp; head like egg</td>
<td>Disease of the muscle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tizhen</td>
<td>A sharp tip like grain of millet</td>
<td>Deficiency of the vessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fengzheng</td>
<td>Three cutting edges</td>
<td>Chronic disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pizhen</td>
<td>A sharp tip like sword</td>
<td>Prick the pustule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuanlizhen</td>
<td>A sharp tip like hair, &amp; its body is bit larger</td>
<td>Treat sudden onset disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haozheng</td>
<td>A tip like a mosquito’s beak</td>
<td>Reinforce the Qi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changzheng</td>
<td>A sharp tip &amp; a thin body</td>
<td>Disease located in the deep layer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dazhen</td>
<td>A tip like a stick &amp; slightly round</td>
<td>Remove the retaining water from the joint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**[Comment]**

Knowing the proper application of nine kinds of needles is the first step in acupuncture techniques. <Sung Shu> was called <Nine Needles> earlier which shows that acupuncturists in ancient times thought highly of the needle and its application.

1. The application of the nine needles. In <Su Wen Chapter 54>, it was first stated that “the various portion of the body correspond with the heaven, earth, four seasons, yin and yang, etc.” For example, the Lung is located at the highest position among the five Zang organs, and it is manifestated at the skin, that is why “skin corresponds with the heaven”. This reveals one very important attribute of Traditional Chinese medicine: man has a physical connection with the universe.

2. Furthermore, it states that: “the application of nine different kinds of needle suit different diseases that occur at the various portions of the body”. For example, “the application of the first kind of needle is to treat diseases of the skin”, etc. It is the principle of selecting needle clinically.

3. The different length and shape of the nine needles relate with the different applications of the needle. For example, “the ‘Chanzhen’ has a big head with a sharp tip; it is used to clear the heat from the skin.” The design of “Chanzhen” guarantees that when one applies this needle to treat skin disease, the needle will puncture the skin and not go too deep. Also for instance, “The ‘Fengzheng’ has three cutting edges; it is used to prick and bleed for the chronic disease.” It makes prick bleeding easily.

4. The statement in <Ling Shu Chapter 78> regarding to the origination, nomenclature, length, shape and application of the nine kinds of needle is the same as in <Su Wen Chapter 54> and <Ling Shu Chapter 1>. In the <Ling Shu Chapter 7> the application of the nine needles is the same as in <Ling Shu Chapter 1>. (<The Gallerions of Shang Pin> : 凡刺之要，官官不妙。九针之宜，各有所为。长短大小，各有所施，不得其用，病弗能移。病浅甚深，内伤外失，皮敷为病；病深针浅，病气不泻，反为大寒。病人小大，气盛则宜，病大则细，病不盛者，亦细为宜。）As we mentioned earlier, whatever <Huangdi Neijing> repeats means it is important. <Ling Shu Chapter 78> is like a copy of <Su Wen Chapter 54> and <Ling Shu Chapter 1>, so one sees how seriously the took the needle in ancient times.

5. The name of nine needles is rarely mentioned in modern times, but its influence can be found everywhere. For example, the “three edged needle” is a copy of “Fengzheng”; and the “seven stars needles” is a copy of the “Chanzhen”. Although in general the needle still remain (even though they have different names, length and shape today), the reality of the nine needles are lost.

For example, the textbook teaches that one can apply the “seven stars needle” on the skin where the distribution of the Lung meridian is to treat asthma or cough, or on the “Huaqiaoji xue” to treat stroke. But the asthma or stroke are dysfunctions of internal Zang-Fu organs, not the skin, instead, the “Haozheng” should be applied to certain acupoints on the meridian.

Also, some acupuncturists apply the short needle or long needle to all kinds of diseases. One of the popular therapeutic techniques today is called “Long needle therapy”. The acupuncturist who applies the long needle to treat all kinds of disease claims that this therapy originates from <Ling Shu>. They quote the statement in <Ling Shu Chapter 7> regarding the long needle “Changzheng” as their theoretical basis, and apply the long needle to an acupoint from the meridian, by penetrating one point to another point.

Long needle is one of the nine needles, and it is only applied for diseases located in the deep layer according to <Ling Shu Chapter 7>
In the next chapter, we will see that the application of the long needle is to treat muscle problems not for dysfunctions of the meridian or Zang-Fu organs, and used to needle the muscle and not on the point.

《Su Wen Chapter 50》 states that "if the location of the disease is shallow or deep, then one should puncture shallow or deeply." It is the general principle in selecting which needle to use.

Application of the long needle therapy as well as the short needle therapy obviously goes against the theory of the nine needles in 《Ling Shu》.

Selecting the right needle is the first step in acupuncture technique. In the next few chapters we will discuss how to apply the different techniques on the needle in order to complete the purpose of treatment.

1-3 Result of the Improper Use of the Nine Needles

《靈樞官針第七》

凡針之要，官針最妙。九針之宜，各有所為，長短大小，各有所施，不得其用，病弗能移。病淺針深，內傷肉，皮膚為癰；病深針淺，病氣不溝，反為大藗。病小針大，氣樞太甚，疾必為害。病大針小，氣不泄瀉，亦復為敗。失針之宜，大者大瀉，小者不移，已言其過，謹言其所施。

《Ling Shu Chapter 7》

The crucial point of acupuncture technique is the application of the nine kinds of the needle. The different applications of the nine kinds of needle depend on their different length and shape. The disease can not be cured if there is improper use of the needle.

If the location of a disease is superficial, but one needles deeply, a carbuncle will appear on the skin and injure the good muscle inside.

If the location of the disease is deep but one needles superficially, the disease will remain and result in a pustule.

If one applies a big needle to treat a slight disease, it will injure the healthy-Qi, and the disease will get worse.

If one applies a small needle to treat a severe disease, the disease will not be reduced and will get worse.

Therefore, applying a big needle for a slight disease will injure the healthy-Qi; applying a small needle for a severe disease can not remove the disease.

These are the results from the misuse of the needle, and then we will discuss proper applications of the needle.

【Comment】

《Ling Shu Chapter 7》 states that "if the location of a disease is superficial, but one needles deeply, a carbuncle will appear on the skin and injure the good muscle inside." The needle is a medical instrument; it is like a two edged sword that can remove disease and injure people as well.