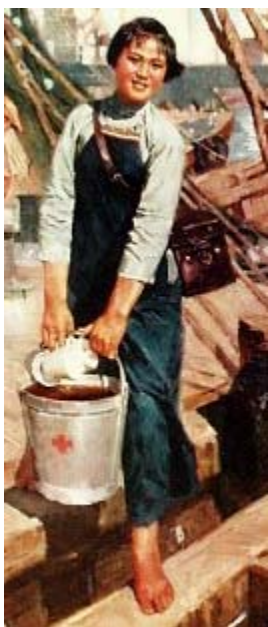


The Barefoot Doctor

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The barefoot doctor system still forms the backbone of the medical services in rural China. In many backward areas of the world, such as countries in Asia the barefoot doctor is capable of administering medical care to villagers, who otherwise could not get to established medical facilities. They travel from village to village taking care of the local population's health concerns. A very large part of the world's population lives, in fact, in rural and sometimes inaccessible areas where Western medicine, due to the constraints of its sophistication, cannot easily be made available. The most potent therapeutic weapon



the barefoot doctor is the acupuncture needle. It is safe, simple effective and economical. Acupuncture, therefore, is the answer, to the health care needs of the greater part of the Third World in many everyday illnesses.

This is not to say that acupuncture should be used only in the absence of Western Medicine. Many people, even in the West, are becoming more aware of the manifold and horrendous complications of drug therapy, and are seeking alternative forms of therapy. But a large quantity of drugs is still consumed as home remedies in minor self-limiting illnesses like the common cold, tonsillitis, insomnia, constipation, headache and gastro-enteritis. It is incumbent for the cultured mind of today to have an elementary understanding of acupuncture and to seek its use for such common disorders, before reaching for the bottle of pills.

Patients to my clinic are amazed at how well acupuncture works for many minor illnesses, once I have had the opportunity to treat them in conjunction to their initial office visit. With a growing number of people realizing the benefits of acupuncture, and proper

administration of Chinese herbal medicine by qualified practitioners, more and more people are reaping its rewards.

Is Chinese medicine for everyone? In one word, no. Can it be combined with Western medicine to achieve an overall better outcome? In one word, yes. The surprising thing I noticed in China when I was doing my clinical work, was that the Chinese people understood the benefit of utilizing both Western and Chinese medicine. The two methods were both incorporated in the hospital, and the patient benefited from this beyond what is happening in the West. Except for those who are knowledgeable enough to incorporate both in their health care.