

**The mode of action of acupuncture in bronchial asthma**

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I was intrigued to read the elegant paper of Dr D. Y. C. Yu and Dr S. P. Lee (*Clinical Science and Molecular Medicine*, 1976, **51**, 503-509) on the effect of acupuncture on bronchial asthma. Their careful experiments strongly suggest that stimulation of the 'Din Chuan' point on both sides, selected as among those specific for asthma, causes a bronchodilatation. As a neurologist, I wonder why, and have examined the site of this point of stimulation. It is described as '3 cm lateral to the mid-point between C7 and T1 spinous processes, directed medially approximately 4 cm deep, to a point just superficial to the junction between the lamina and the transverse process of the T1 vertebra'. Could it be that stimulation at this site, by manual rotation at 1 cycle/s for 10 min, excites the sympathetic outflow (via either the T1 roots, the rami communicantes, the lower cervical ganglia, or the cardiopulmonary sympathetic nerves) to cause bronchodilatation?

The data in Fig. 1 of Yu & Lee (1976) suggest a lesser response to isoprenaline after acupuncture at this site, and they note a small but significant increase in heart rate (90 to 100,

$P < 0.05$ ). Both might be due to specific sympathetic stimulation. I wonder if there was any vasoconstriction in the arms, evidence of hair erection or change in galvanic skin response in the appropriate dermatomes?

The exact site of the needle tip, at the junction of the lamina and transverse process of the T1 vertebra, would not be ideal for stimulation of T1 sympathetic efferents which emerge in the ventral root, nor of the inferior cervical ganglion which lies on the ventro-lateral aspect of the vertebral column. However, it might be adjacent to the sympathetic afferents entering the cord via the dorsal roots, excitation of which might reflexly cause sympathetic stimulation of bronchial musculature, and perhaps the subjective sensory experiences reported. It would be of great interest to learn the exact site of the other acupuncture points regarded as specific for asthma.

**Reference**

YU, D.Y.C. & LEE, S.P. (1976) Effect of acupuncture on bronchial asthma. *Clinical Science and Molecular Medicine*, **51**, 503-509.

**Correction**

DE WARDENER, H.E. (1977) Natriuretic hormone. *Clinical Science and Molecular Medicine*, **53**, 1-8.

Page 4, second column, line 23: 500 mg *should read* 500  $\mu$ g.