Explaining the Differences between Oriental Medicine and Western Medicine to Your Patients
by Curry Chaudoir, Dipl.Ac.

Oriental Medicine, which includes the use of exercise, nutrition, acupuncture, Chinese herbs, and massage, has been developing for thousands of years. Although the medicine may seem complex for your patients to understand, it becomes easier if they can grasp logical, basic concepts regarding the simplicity of the body. Use the following with your patients (as you see fit) to explain the differences between conventional Western Medicine and Oriental Medicine.

Oriental Medicine’s view of the body is different than conventional Western Medicine in at least four significant ways:

1. In conventional Western Medicine, more often than not the symptom alone is diagnosed and treated. Whereas in Oriental Medicine, it is always the goal to treat the underlying root cause of manifested symptoms.
2. In conventional Western Medicine, the quantities of bodily substances (for example, the number of Liver enzymes in the blood stream) and images of the body’s internal parts (for example, those images viewed via X-ray or MRI) are the most important diagnostic tools used; in Oriental Medicine, qualities and relationships between systems in the body are the most important diagnostic tools used. The following illustrates this difference: an Acupuncturist may observe – using the diagnostic tools of Oriental Medicine to understand the relationships between bodily systems – that mental stress decreases Liver function, causing the Liver to negatively affect the Heart, which may constrict the blood vessels, in turn leading to high blood pressure. In contrast, a Medical Doctor may check one’s blood pressure, using the systolic and diastolic quantities given to simply indicate that “stress” causes high blood pressure without understanding why the high blood pressure exists, only that the symptom of high blood pressure exists.
3. Conventional Western Medicine is unsurpassed in the diagnosis of health problems; subsequently, conventional Western Medicine is most useful in the treatment of acute, crisis situations. However, it is often unable to effectively resolve chronic conditions, whereas Oriental Medicine is excellent in the diagnosis and treatment of long-term, chronic problems. Additionally, many acute conditions may also benefit from immediate Oriental medical treatment (for example, ankle sprains and similar acute sprains/strains heal rapidly if treated in the first two weeks following the injury).
4. Conventional Western Medicine views the body as static and unchanging; Oriental Medicine views the body as dynamic and capable of change in many ways. For example, it is common for a Medical Doctor to say, “You have diabetes and you’ll have to live with it.” An Acupuncturist may say, “Let’s improve Spleen/Pancreatic system function so that the body utilizes more of its own insulin to improve the diabetes.”

This article is an excerpt from the newly released book *Oriental Medicine and You* by Curry Chaudoir.

About the Author

Curry Chaudoir, Dipl. Ac. is the executive director and senior acupuncturist of Acupuncture and Holistic Health Associates in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Since 1999, he has treated over 25,000 patients with a broad range of conditions using acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, and massage therapy.

Curry earned his Masters of Science degree in Oriental Medicine at Southwestern Acupuncture College in Santa Fe, NM. Since then, he has constantly furthered his knowledge in Oriental medicine and related studies through post-graduate work at prestigious higher-learning institutions and healthcare seminars throughout the country. Curry is also a practice management consultant for David Singer Enterprises.

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