

Acupuncture Point Combinations, The Key to Clinical Success

by Jeremy Ross

Reviewed by Doug Eisenstark L.Ac.

The amount and quality of Chinese Medicine literature available from Western publishers continues to grow. Churchill Livingstone, a medical text publisher, has recently been active in printing both Chinese and native English authors. Students may be very familiar with their dog-eared copies of Giovanni Maciocia's Foundations of Chinese Medicine. Less known may be titles such as Maciocia's recent follow-up, The Practice of Chinese Medicine (known as the "Silver" and "Gold" books respectively). Of no less significance is A Clinical Guide to Chinese Herbs and Formulae by Chen Son Yu and Li Fei. All of the Churchill-Livingstone books share a high degree of readability and coherence in their presentation. Books published in the West can be especially important to Western practitioners because they focus on issues more likely to be found here. Because of these books and the important publications from the Eastland and Blue Poppy Presses, the English literature about Oriental Medicine is growing steadily along with the Western interest in Oriental Medicine.

Acupuncture Point Combinations, The Key to Clinical Success, by Jeremy Ross goes further than most books on the same subject. Ross clearly states in the introduction that Acupuncture Point Combinations deals with deeper treatments involving the organ systems and constitutional issues and not with symptomatic point combinations. This decision reflects Ross's depth as a practitioner. In over 400 pages, Ross outlines different treatment methods including many styles of "5-element" and "Eight-Extra" treatments (although Japanese acupuncture is not addressed). He devotes a large section to a thorough discussion of the elemental personality types. At last, a writer has been able to present this concept in a coherent and useful manner. Later chapters are devoted to the organ systems and then to 45 individual syndromes often found in the clinic.

Ross's willingness to address psychological issues are reflected throughout the book. Each of the chapters on the organs includes its emotional energetics. For example, his introduction to the Large Intestine points includes not just channel problems, heat in the blood, various stagnations and but also combinations of points to clear the mind. Much space is given to the function of the Kidneys on a psychological/emotional level. One can then look at Acupuncture Point Combinations as an expansion of the most intriguing aspects of Maciocia's "Foundations" book. While Maciocia's "Practice" book would admirably bring up in brief concepts of personality and treatment, Ross is able to do in-depth discussions of them.

The author shares his clinical experience and opinions about various treatment styles. Ross writes extensively about opening points, antique (transporting) points, 5 element and 8 extra treatments. Rather than seeing them as distinct and separate systems he is clearly able to describe the relationships between them and when best not and best to use them in combination.

The book presents a comprehensive review of the organ systems. Discussions about the Spleen, for example, include the organ both as a center of energy and as a functional organ. Kidney syndromes involving Jing, Qi, Yang and Yin are clearly differentiated. Relationships between the different organs lead to more of those famous graphs for which Ross developed in his previous book, "Zang-Fu".

Acupuncture Point Combinations lives up to his name. For example, if you know that Ren (CV) 17 should be used, Ross provides tables with the functions of over two dozen other points that can be used in combination. This comprehensive book is both an in-clinic quick reference and night-time reading. Standard common sense combinations are presented along side more complex ideas. Acupuncture Point Combinations should assist many practitioners in enhancing their treatments.