

# Preface

In 2005, the American Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine published the results of a survey they had done of their members. One of the main survey questions was something like, “In what areas of study do you wish you had received more training when you were in school?” A common thread in the responses indicated that one area where practitioners felt they wanted and needed more training was in the basics of Western medicine. They felt a need for skills that would allow them greater ease and knowledge when working in Western health care environments, when communicating to Western medical caregivers on behalf of their patients, and in order to refer appropriately in life-threatening medical situations.

In the years since this survey, schools of acupuncture and Oriental medicine (OM), now called Asian medicine by some state legislatures,<sup>1</sup> have responded by adding more courses in Western science and basic pre-med knowledge such as biochemistry, Western pathology, and, at some schools, courses on Western medical physical examination and history-taking skills. However, despite courses on this last subject, there has not, until now, been a book or other learning tool on performing a Western physical examination written specifically for OM practitioners. It is the hope of the authors that this multimedia book and CD/online learning resource fills that need or begins to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> There is a nascent movement in our industry to stop using the word “Oriental” and replace it with the word “Asian” as the legal term or descriptor of our profession. It is believed by some people that the word “Oriental” has a negative or pejorative historical connotation. The title of this book acknowledges the ongoing discussion of this issue. That being said, the major organizations, certification and accreditation bodies, and associations within our industry still use the word Oriental as part of their names. For that reason, we have maintained the use of the word Oriental medicine (OM) throughout this text.

Why, one might ask, can acupuncture practitioners and students not simply use other books currently available on physical examination that have been written for medical doctors or those created for nursing students? While it is a valid question, our response is that what practitioners of OM need to learn from performing such an exam and how that information is used are very different from the needs and uses of more traditional Western caregivers.

First of all, we do not do a *complete* Western medical diagnosis. Most of us do not order blood work and other lab tests or imaging studies, nor do we make diagnostic judgments about such tests that our patients may already have had. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, we do not use, or at least should not use, any of the information from any Western medical diagnostic procedure in order to do a correct Chinese medical pattern discrimination because these are not part of the four methods of examination in Chinese medicine.

Secondly, many of the standard parts of a Western physical examination are not legally part of our scope of practice. We do not, for example, do gynecological bimanual palpation of the internal genitalia or proctological palpation on men. Nor are we required to know how to use many of the tools commonly required by Western medical caregivers when doing thorough physical exams such as a strabismoscope, a tympanometer, a goniometer, an axillary infrared thermometer, or a transilluminator.

What we do need to understand is how to do a condensed version of a physical exam that fits within our scope of practice and allows us to make note of any possible red flags about which our patients may either be unaware (or perhaps about which they are in denial), but require either emergent or at least prompt analysis and treatment beyond the realm of our skills or legal prerogatives.

Furthermore, even a basic understanding of the process and terminology of Western physical examination allows us a more comfortable ability to communicate with any other caregiver that a patient may have on their personal health care team. If acupuncturists and Oriental medicine providers are to become accepted allied health professionals in the future world of integrated medicine, such an ability cannot be underestimated.

Looking at how this book is designed and what it contains, it is easy to see that our primary focus was to create a tightly-focused learning tool on Western physical examination for students of Chinese medicine who are still in school. This is not to say that a practitioner who has been in practice for a decade could

not also find this a useful resource. However, the quizzes, review exercises, clinical scenarios with accompanying questions, and in-class activity ideas are specifically a resource for students and faculty at the three-score or so colleges of acupuncture and OM in North America and other English-speaking parts of the world.

The accompanying CD provides a specific portal (accessible only through this CD) to a website containing a wide variety of web-based learning tools such as videos of many of the specific examinations covered in the book, links to websites where students might listen to both healthy and pathological heart and lung sounds, information about Western medical imaging studies, and a quick reference guide to Western drugs that patients may be taking. It is our hope and intent to continue to add useful web-based tools and information to this website as we find or create them and/or as they are requested by the users of these materials.

As pioneers in the field of integrated Chinese-Western medicine textbooks and course materials in English, we at Blue Poppy Enterprises are definitely still experimenting with what students and practitioners of OM want and need in this regard. Because of that, we appreciate and need your feedback on how we might make these resources more useful, and we welcome your comments and suggestions for continued improvement. Thank you for being our readers and we wish you every success in your career in the field of acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

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February, 2009