

Tonification Technique: Importance of Hand (Oshide)

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After arriving in the U.S., I was quite surprised to find that acupuncturists here are instructed not to use the left hand when needling. I'd always thought skillful use of the left hand use was necessary for needle technique. Not to use the left hand in this way is unheard of in Japan. Although I understood the issue of Clean Needle Technique in the U.S., I felt anxious about it. In order to meet sterilization standards of medical institutions such as hospitals, only the right hand is used to insert and one cannot touch the shaft of the needle. Similar rules apply to point location. In general, sterilized cotton balls or gauze is used on selected points or to grasp the shaft of the needle (this rule seems to have been adopted recently).

In the classics, the importance of using the left hand is written as "the left hand protects the Ki". What does this mean? I would like you to understand the facts from our studies and learn from their results, so you can master the tonification technique. In previous journals I wrote about the physical and mental attitudes which affect the treatment. This time I will describe the details of needle technique. In Hari basic needle technique is very important. I will also describe how the pulse changes with the needle technique.

Shape of the Oshide

A. General Technique

You can make the Oshide (with your thumb and index finger) in the shape of a full moon, half moon or crescent. In the Hari Society, it is said that any shape is good, but the full moon shape is best. In addition, the tips of the Oshide fingers should be closed together. If the tip of the fingers are uneven with each other, it is said that the Ki does not come together.

The left hand is placed lightly on the patients' body as if your Oshide is a feather. You must pay particular attention to the weight of your thumb and index fingers. It is common to increase the weight on your fingers during the needle insertion without your awareness.

The Kamen ("bottom face", the part of the thumb and index finger which contact the skin of the point) of the Oshide should stick to the skin lightly; especially if you are a beginner, this will give better results. Place the other three fingers lightly on the patients' body (as if you are coveting the patients' body) to stabilize the Oshide. When you are ready for needle manipulation, make sure that your left hand is stable and unmovable. And remember that your fingers, wrist, elbow, shoulder and your entire body need to be loose and relaxed.

Pulse Chances: If the Oshide: is *heavy*, the pulse becomes sinking and hard; is *too light*, the pulse becomes floating and wide; or other areas of the body have *excess tension*, the pulse becomes hard and rough; is *unstable and moves*, the pulse becomes unstable or rapid.

B. Preparing for tonification technique

Your left hand (Oshide) is on a selected point on your patient. At this time, the tip of the needle peeking out from the Kamen touches the selected point. The tip of the needle should not be exposed to the air. The method is as follows:

As you tighten the Oshide, the space between the Oshide fingers and the patients' skin becomes smaller. Also, try to close the Kamen (side of your thumb and index finger that touches the patient) more tightly;

From the posterior view, the tip of the needle should be in the center of the Kamen. Don't just use the tips of the fingers; the more contact the finger joints make on your Oshide, the longer the treatment lasts. It strengthens the Tonification method and makes the space between the Oshide fingers and the patients' skin smaller.

Pulse Changes: If the Kamen of the Oshide is not closed enough, the tip of the needle is exposed; Ki leaks. The pulse becomes wide, soft, floating or rapid. It becomes a Kyo (deficient) type pulse. If it is closed enough and the tip of the needle is not exposed, Ki does not leak the pulse outline is clear, and the pulse becomes resilient and Jitsu (excess) type.

Sayuatsu {(Right-left pressure, or the pressure of the thumb and index finger)}

This is especially important. We say "Sayuatsu brings Tonification"; it is our common understanding in the Hari Society. Controlling the Sayuatsu has a big influence on the treatment; simultaneously it balances the pulse quality.

When I was apprenticed at Fukushima sensei's Clinic, he used to point out my lack of Sayuatsu. Therefore I tightened the Sayuatsu a lot, and then I was able to make a strong pulse without leaking Ki. This makes a big difference in the results of the tonification technique and the durability of the treatment. This Sayuatsu was the result of clinical study by Fukushima sensei, Kozato sensei and other senior teachers.

Another very important point about Sayuatsu is that it increases your concentration. As a beginner, lack of concentration makes for a lack of strength in the pulse. The treatment is not strong enough. The right usage of Sayuatsu helps to harmonize the pulse quality. Please refer to my description of this in the last issue of the journal.

Attention: In order not to leak the Ki. The Sayuatsu is always essential but in the following instances it is impossible to apply: So, please be careful. If the Sayuatsu is too strong, the needle cannot be advanced. During the needle advance, the pulse will start changing. You need to be aware of that the treatment is already starting at this time. If your Sayuatsu is slightly loose (but not wide open), and your concentration is on the tip of the needle, then you will avoid Ki leakage. When the needle approaches the point, increase the Sayuatsu slightly and close the Kamen. Continue to advance the needle until it reaches the most appropriate depth for the patient. When you've reached the right depth, apply more Sayuatsu then proceed with the tonification technique. If Sayuatsu is too strong, the needle does not advance. If Sayuatsu is too little, Ki leaks. After you gather sufficient Ki, you simultaneously close the Oshide and remove the needle with 100% of Sayuatsu.

Pulse Changes: If Sayuatsu is too weak, the pulse becomes soft and slightly wide; too strong, and the pulse becomes tight and hard; strong enough, and the pulse becomes consolidated and rich; 100% applied when removing the needle, and the pulse becomes better after removing the needle; weak when removing the needle, the pulse reverts soon after improving. It is necessary to control the Sayuatsu depending on the patients' optimal pulse quality and physical condition. As a clinical tip, when you treat a patient who has floating pulse quality and weak physical type, you apply 70-80% Sayuatsu for tonification. When you treat a patient who has a strong pulse quality with a lot of Jaki, you apply 50 - 60% Sayuatsu for tonification. These also differ in Summer and Winter.

Another Important Factor for the Left Hand

Painful needle insertion should be avoided. If your Oshide is good, the patient feels no pain even if the needle touches or penetrates the skin. The patient just feels the Ki sensation on the meridian or on the point. If the needle manipulation is painful, the pulse becomes unbalanced and then the balanced pulse quality is hard to bring back. Also, with painful technique, the point does not accept the tonification, and Ki energy is not sent to a deep level. Painful needling is not appropriate for the purpose of Honchiho (Root treatment) which targets the cause of the disease. Painless treatment serves to protect the Ki.

Kozato, former vice president of the Toyo Hari Association, used to say that if you attain the highest quality tonification technique, you do not need any other techniques. As you already know, the cause of disease originates from In-Kyo (Yin deficiency). When this Kyo condition of the body is being treated with perfect tonification technique, Ja (evil) will not enter the body. Even if the Ja does enter, it will be expelled from the body due to the strength of the Ki. Therefore, good tonification technique in the Honchiho is enough for treating illness. As Kozato sensei stated, the goal for acupuncture training is to master tonification technique

What I have introduced here comes from the results of Hari Society studies and from my own experiences which may help your tonification technique. But these are not the final results. Also, this information about technique is given to you according to the Society's rules. All Hari members share this same basic technique. Other associations' techniques are a little different. If you use different techniques, you will get different results; so please use the same basic technique taught in the Hari Society if you would like to see the same results.

Finally, I would like you not only to talk about this technique, but also please keep practicing it with our colleagues.