

# *How I discovered Acupuncture*

By Kate Kent, Dipl. Ac., C.H. (NCCAOM)

I was first introduced to acupuncture via the television. A friend of mine was suffering from some indefinable illness that no medical or alternative doctor could find the cause for. I remember the evening well. We were sitting on the couch together and I was wondering how much longer he was going to survive. He had been getting weaker and weaker for months and now he was going out like a candle before my eyes and I could do nothing about it. Then, on the screen appeared a Chinese doctor giving acupuncture. It was intriguing and he talked about “Qi” as energy and other things I can’t remember. I do remember that a light went on in my head and I decided that my friend was going to try it. Thus started a new chapter to my life, one I had been unconsciously waiting for.



I had spent many years training and being a ballet dancer and I couldn’t imagine living without it. The smell of the theatre, grease paint, starvation, sweat, tears and, yes, blood were addictive. There is so much physical torture being a dancer that one needs to be born with the gene of survival. I had that, but my feet didn’t. I broke a toe on tour and continued to dance (the show must go on) with the result that my feet got damaged beyond repair and no longer had the capacity to tolerate the daily grind on point.

The years after giving that up were the worst I’d ever experienced. I felt as though a vital part of me had been cut out leaving a huge hole. I trained to be a massage therapist. I could identify with pain and thought that would be a good way to make a difference. I started working at Elizabeth Ardens on Bond Street in London, England. That was fun for a while but the people I gave treatments to were mostly bored and extremely wealthy and I didn’t feel I could get my teeth into really helping them.

In 1974 I immigrated to Canada to “find myself”. I did wild and wonderful things until that night a couple of years later that I discovered acupuncture via the television.

I remember the first treatment my friend had, in a room with lots of other people. I remember that, as the needles were inserted, blood rushed to his face and he lost the pallor he’d had for so long. We spent months going for treatment and I was amazed at the difference I saw in people after only a few weeks. My friend also made steady progress and, without knowing anything about this strange new treatment, I decided then and there to make it my career. Finally I had found something that would enable me to help people whilst keeping me intellectually stimulated.

My training was long and arduous. At that time in Canada there were no full-time acupuncture schools and in fact very little was offered in the way of acupuncture. I needed to work during the day so I had to train part-time which amounted to one class a week. I gave myself five weeks to grow tired of it but quite the opposite happened. I became more and more intrigued, interested and passionate about it. I spent some time in Beijing, China, working in the hospitals and my passion grew. I saw miracles happen

with just a few needles and if I had any doubts about its efficacy before the trip, they were expelled. Having been looked at as something of an abnormality in Canada where acupuncture was considered “strange”, it was a wonderful experience training in a place where traditional Chinese medicine was considered normal.

Now, in 2005, I have been happily and successfully practicing in my own clinic for 20 years. It is always a challenge because, in this profession, the moment I think I know it all, something comes along to show me how much more there is to learn. Bad for the ego, very good for enduring interest. During training my classmates and I dubbed Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) “terribly confusing medicine” because the more you know the more there is to know!

I was very happy some seven years ago to be invited by the Shiatsu School of Canada to teach both acupuncture and herbs. It was a real adrenalin rush for me to be able to share this fascinating modality with others and to see the fire ignite in them as well. The school, having already established a great Shiatsu program, made the decision to do the same with acupuncture, and I was delighted to take on the role of Director and Coordinator of the acupuncture program. Over the years the program has not only been getting stronger and stronger but has also stood the test of time. We are constantly adding and fine tuning it and have now put together a 1900 hour program which covers in depth every facet of this modality.

Students are given a strong foundation in the theory of acupuncture, after which they learn how to locate and palpate points, how to practice clean needle technique, and all the different variations of needling. They are given many lectures on the differentiation and treatment of disease at which point they go into clinic. We offer 650 hours of clinical practice (250 of which is Japanese acupuncture). Clinic is where they put into practice all they have learned. In a supervised setting they start assessing and treating each other and then move to real patients who are looking for help. A supervisor is always at hand to support their work, demonstrate, offer encouragement and answer questions.

We have attracted top rate teachers who are committed to the “cause”, which is to enable students to get the best tuition available so they can go out into the community well trained and confident.

I often think back to the “Dark Ages” when I felt so isolated doing acupuncture. Now I see the interest, understanding and opportunities available today and it makes it all worthwhile. I’m amazed at how far it has come. I’m really glad to be a part of it.