

## **Variations on point location based on geographical location: An observation from two different clinics**

Since relocating from my practice in Long Island, New York to Baltimore, Maryland, I have made a peculiar observation in my clinic in regards to shoulder pain and stiffness. I would like to share these experiences and would also ask if other practitioners have noticed a similar situation if they have practiced in different areas across the globe. In the last few months I began to think about the difference in points and areas that I've been using in my Baltimore Clinic as opposed to my Long Island Clinic. Please understand that these observations are more anecdotal and have not been compiled and interpreted as formal data on every patient I've treated over the last eight years. Think of it more as a general musing rather than a rigid clinical investigation.

It seems as though every patient who has entered my clinic has some tightness in and around the shoulders. This means that working on patients' shoulders occurs with nearly every treatment I perform. It seems to be that extra bit which helps ease stress, and at the very least a nice ending to their treatments. As all practicing acupuncturists know, points are not fixed in location. Hence, when points are mentioned in this article, please note that a larger, general area is being implied and the most active point is then selected.

### **The Long Island Shoulder**

The Long Island patient base seemed to almost always have tightness in the area between GB20 and Yanagiya's GB20; the area around GB21, specifically the more cranial portion of the muscle including what some practitioners call anterior GB21; and an area along the second bladder line roughly from T1-T5. In order of severity of reaction and sensitivity to pressure the GB20 area was normally most severe followed by the GB21 area. The third most severe area would be along the T1-T5 outer bladder line.

### **The Baltimore Shoulder**

Baltimoreans present with some significant differences in shoulder tightness. Specifically, instead of GB21 pain, there appears to be more pain posterior in the SJ 15/SI 11 region. There also tends to be more sensitivity around GB20 and Bl 10, especially upper Bl10. The biggest difference seems to manifest in the scapula area lower and wider than the New York shoulder. This area seems to manifest between T4-T9 and wider than the 3 cun outer bladder line, reaching to the medial border of the scapula. As far as sensitivity is concerned, SJ/15/SI11 area seems most reactive followed by GB20/BL10 area, then T5-T9 area. While this variation of tightness in the shoulders is slight, it has definitely been noted repeatedly in my new clinic.

### **Possible causes for the change in shoulder tightness locations**

With any experiment or observation, there is always some variability that can be accounted for by the experimenter or observer. While there is no reason to call this informal observation a formal experiment, some of the blame must be put on the acupuncturist. As any acupuncturist continues to practice their point preference, location techniques, and overall understanding of the energy system alters. Hopefully, for my

patients' sake, this has been for the better! Over the last three years in Baltimore, I have added animal acupuncture to my practice, including treating an elderly giraffe at a local zoo. There have also been several seminars, many discussions with other acupuncturists and great NAJOM articles. All of these influences have revised and altered my treatment method and point preference. But to say that there has been such a change in my style in just a few short years would be very arrogant of me. I would like to think that my continued learning and experience has made me more aware of the subtle shift in my point location.

Perhaps some explanation can be found with the patients themselves. Both my practices had a wide range of both professionals and laborers, young and old, male and female, chronic and acute conditions, and every race. After reviewing patient files from both Long Island and Baltimore, the only difference is in the average age of patients. In Long Island, the average age was around 50, while in Baltimore, I see a larger number of younger patients pulling the average age closer to 35. Perhaps the stress of life has not set in yet in these younger patients. Even this does not really give an answer to the difference in sore points along the back.

The only other conclusion that I have found is that this may be a product of the environment. While there are differences in the pace of life and the size of the cities, the biggest difference seems to be the overall "feel" of the city. Long Island seems to carry a much higher level of energy; people work longer hours have more stressful jobs, sleep less and tend to be very active. Perhaps the lack of sleep and the constant activity in the New York area has caused some overall damage to the Heart Qi, and perhaps that is why even when resting their minds are still constantly going. It was very common for me to return to a treatment room to find a patient on their cell phone talking to someone at work. This might explain the tightness and tension found around the PC and HT back shu points. It could be an indication that their Shen never returns to the heart to rest.

Baltimore is a bit more laid back, there is more of a Southern feeling, and things get done at a slower pace, people drive slower, walk slower and work slower. Baltimore does contain some of that southern charm where people say hello to each other, hold doors for one another and in some cases appear more civil than areas of New York. One thing that I have noticed in Baltimore, which is hidden, but definitely palpable is anger and edginess to the population. If one looks closer at Baltimore, you will notice a much higher violent crime rate; a younger population who are well educated, but upset with current social problems; and a larger separation between those who have money and those who do not. It is possible that this hidden anger in Baltimore's society may play into the increased muscle tightness and pain lower along the Bladder line including the Liver and Gallbladder areas.

There may be other explanations as to why there is a noticeable difference in point tenderness between both geographical locations, but after much thought and reflection, I cannot think of any others. In my attempt to figure out the reason I have only come across another question: Does one's environment, specifically the general sentiment of a place, alter the flow of energy and thereby allowing for changes in point sensitivity? My

initial response is yes, of course. A more thought out answer will require more observation and possibly experimentation before I attempt to discuss that topic.

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