



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL SCHOOL AT DALLAS

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DALLAS--The president of the American Society of Anesthesiologists has written the White House and top government health leaders offering society cooperation in any official study of acupuncture and suggesting an exchange of American and Chinese physicians to aid in its research.

Dr. M.T. Jenkins, chairman of the Department of Anesthesiology at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School, decried, however, hasty experimentation with or superficial observation of the technique:

"We don't feel that this can be done in a three-week junket to China with a stop-over in Hong Kong for a new suit of clothes."

Some experiments with acupuncture already have been reported in the United States.

Dr. Jenkins pointed to a just-issued statement by his society:

"The American Society of Anesthesiologists is gravely concerned over premature application of acupuncture to American patients for relief of pain during surgery. The safety of American medicine has been built on the scientific evaluation of each technique before it becomes a widely-accepted concept in medical practice. The premature use of acupuncture in the United States at this time departs from this traditional approach.

"A potentially valuable technique which has been developed over thousands of years in China is being hastily applied with little thought to safeguards or hazards. Among the potential hazards is the application to the patient who has not been properly evaluated psychologically. If acupuncture is applied indiscriminately, severe mental trauma could result in certain patients.

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first add acupuncture

"Another hazard is the possible misuse by quacks in attempting to treat a variety of illnesses, including cancer and arthritis, thus diverting the patient from obtaining established medical therapy. Exploitation may delude the public into believing that acupuncture is good for whatever ails you," the statement continued in part.

Dr. Jenkins noted that in the widespread publicity about acupuncture--"What we're ignoring are reports we're getting from China that not more than 20 per cent of patients are exposed to acupuncture and of that group there is only a 70 per cent incidence of success."

The Dallas anesthesiologist said he has written White House Physician Walter R. Tkach, Secretary of State William Rogers, and Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare Elliot Richardson expressing the ASA's willingness to participate in experiments and scientific missions.

Dr. Jenkins said that he had received a communication from Dr. DeWitt Stetten Jr., director of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, expressing general agreement on an exchange of American and Chinese physicians but adding that the mechanism and date of such missions would have to be worked out.

As to studies conducted in this country, Dr. Jenkins said, "Our approach is a conservative one--to do a study and not to have an exhibit put on."

He said that of the various theories of pain, acupuncture may well fit under the "gate theory" developed by R. Melzack and P.D. Wall.

"But this doesn't account for the reported success in treating peritonitis or deafness or blindness. What we need are studies in a clinical laboratory sense."

He observed: "This is something that should be applicable to experimental animals."

The latter part of the ASA's statement notes:

"Acupuncture may indeed have considerable merit and may eventually find an important role in American medicine. That role can only be determined by objective evaluation over a period of years.

second add acupuncture

"As the discipline most seriously concerned, the American Society of Anesthesiologists, whose membership is comprised of 11,500 physicians, feels a great responsibility to learn what it can through dialogue with Chinese acupuncture specialists. The value of acupuncture (its indications, contraindications, and hazards) cannot be learned by a three-week junket to the People's Republic of China.

"The ASA feels that a team of American scientists, including anesthesiologists, neurophysiologists, psychiatrists, surgeons, and medical hypnotherapists should visit China under official auspices for an indeterminate period to give prolonged and serious study to acupuncture.

"The ASA has established its own task force to coordinate all activities concerned with acupuncture. It also has placed its resources and expertise at the disposal of the Federal Government in pursuing acupuncture studies."

The statement is signed by Dr. Jenkins as president; Dr. E.S. Siker as president-elect, and Dr. Frank Moya, vice president for scientific affairs, for the society.

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