

Interview with Dr. Richard Teh-Fu Tan

Dr. Richard Teh-Fu Tan recently gave a fascinating lecture at the TCM-Congress in Rothenburg. He is a dynamic speaker who is famous in the United States for his unique treatment style. Dr. Tan now brings his knowledge of the Balance Method to Europe, and he is quickly becoming world-renown for his teachings. The following is an interview with Dr. Tan on his background and his amazing work.

Editor: Please share your earliest memories of Chinese Medicine. Who were your first teachers?

Dr. Tan: I began observing my father treating patients when I was only a small toddler living in Taiwan. By the age of 7, my father would send me away during the long summer vacations to study with various masters of Chinese Medicine. I apprenticed with numerous teachers and studied herbal medicine, five elements, zang-fu energetics and channel theory. It was part of my childhood and always part of my life. By the age of 22, I was treating up to 40 people per day in the army hospital. I treated countless emergency cases with acupuncture and I grew to respect the power in which acupuncture could treat acute situations. After my mandatory military service, I moved to the United States at the age of 25. However, I continued to expand on my early teachings by absorbing information from classical texts. I did countless hours of self-study and research in order to develop an effective treatment style for my patients.

Editor: What motivated you to start teaching?

Dr. Tan: I was very surprised when I realized that the acupuncturists in the US were very frustrated with their practices, and many of them wanted to give up their careers as acupuncturists. Most of these practitioners were trained in western schools and I had a very different background. If you understand the classical way to diagnose and treat patients using acupuncture, you can achieve immediate results. My favorite calligraphy is “Li Gan Jian Ying.” This translates as: “When you place a pole under the sun, you immediately see its shadow.” Similarly, acupuncture can yield strong and immediate results! I wanted to share this with practitioners in the west, and I began to organize my work into seminars.

Editor: What did you enjoy about teaching in Rothenburg and lecturing at other international seminars?

Dr. Tan: I truly enjoy the different cultures and being exposed to practitioners from all backgrounds. I love to exchange information with other practitioners and share our

varied knowledge. I usually try to shape my teachings based on the needs of the group. In Rothenburg, the practitioners are extremely open-minded, educated and kind. I would say that they are more flexible and open to new ideas. I enjoy this great acceptance of my work and I feel that the participants can absorb my teachings at a deep level. Likewise, I had the opportunity to treat some patients in Switzerland and I was very impressed with the patients. They were very open to my style and I feel that they are less skeptical than my patients in the US!

Editor: You are famous for the Balance Method. What is so unique about this method?

Dr. Tan: The Balance Method is a simple, yet highly effective, way to achieve instant results in your clinic. I think so many people use the Balance Method because it is easy, and most importantly, it really works! Most acupuncturists trained today receive the majority of their education based on Zang-Fu diagnosis. While this is great for herbal treatments, Channel Theory has historically been used as the diagnostic tool for *acupuncture* treatment plans. The Balance Method is comprised of 5 systems that are based on channel theory. I use it in my clinic everyday and it is the most effective way of treating acute and chronic illnesses. It is very easy to understand and I believe that my teachings are well-received because everyone can go home after my lecture and achieve results right away. They suddenly understand the relationship between the meridians and the I *Ching* and the Ba Gua. It is very rewarding to see students get excited about this knowledge. In a nutshell, my students learn how to diagnose using channel theory and they learn how to select accurate points.

Editor: How is your point selection different than other treatment styles?

Dr. Tan: Again, most practitioners are taught “point functions” based on Zang-Fu diagnosis. Therefore, they may choose Stomach 36 because it strengthens Stomach Qi. The Balance Method chooses points based on a hologram system. I teach how to choose points based on the Imaging and Mirroring Formats. With these methods, it is easy to see why classical points treat certain areas of the body. For instance, I do use ST 36 for poor digestion. However, I use it because that point is an *image* of the stomach organ when using the Imaging Format. It is very simple and all my students are amazed at the results when they choose points in this way.

Editor: What classes did you teach in Rothenburg this year?

Dr. Tan: I taught the “Basics of the Balance Method for External and Internal Conditions” and I also taught “Balancing the Five Elements Using the Balance Method.” All of my teachings use the same foundation as I described earlier. They are all based on the I *Ching* and classical theory. Therefore, once my students learn the basics and begin to practice this method, they have no problem learning advanced classes. As a matter of

fact, many of my students have followed me for years because they are so fascinated with the power of the Balance Method. I wanted to teach these foundations in Rothenburg, as well as some advanced work. It was a wonderful experience.

Editor: Did you invent the 5 Systems of the Balance Method?

Dr. Tan: No! I did not create these ideas. They have been around for thousands of years and recorded in classical texts and papers. However, I did work for many years to combine them into a systematic method that can be applied easily in clinical practice. The knowledge is spread throughout teachings that exist over the past 5,000 years. It is not new knowledge, but I am one of only a few people who compiled these teachings and present them in an organized fashion. I took these teachings and applied them in my own clinical practice. After years of success, I chose to share these teachings with others. I feel the best research is hands-on knowledge. You need to see it work for yourself before you can believe it. I tell my students to go back to their clinics and try the Balance Method on their next 25 patients. If they are open enough to try something new, they are always amazed with the results.

Editor: The attendees in Rothenburg were impressed by your audience demonstrations because many people experienced instant pain relief. Is the Balance Method used only for pain?

Dr. Tan: Absolutely not. About 50% of my patients come to my office for internal complaints. This year in Rothenburg, I chose to teach the “Balance Method for External and Internal Disorders” because I want people to understand that the Balance Method is extremely useful in all cases. I do not want people to feel that it is a limited system. Therefore, I chose to talk about other disorders such as digestive complaints, neurological diseases and respiratory problems in my recent lecture in Rothenburg. The Balance Method has achieved great popularity due to its ability to relieve pain, but it can do so much more.

Editor: Please tell us about the books that you have available.

Dr. Tan: I have three books available titled: _____.
The first two books are clinical manuals which can be used as a quick and effective method to find specific points based on the symptoms. These were my first books which were very well received by thousands of acupuncturists. After using these points, many people sought after my teachings because they wanted to understand the theory behind the books. I taught this theory for years and I finally released my third book by popular demand. This book explains the basic theory which forms the foundation of the Balance Method. The second part of the book introduces “Dr. Tan’s Strategy of 12 Magical

Points.” These three books have been translated into German and they are available at:
_____.

Editor: Can you tell us more about the Twelve Magical Points?

Dr. Tan: The Twelve Magical Points is my own invention and I developed it because of a growing need in my clinic. In the modern world, many patients now come into my office with multiple complaints, or complicated disorders that affect numerous systems in the body. Some examples include fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic fatigue syndrome and complicated headaches. The 12 Magical Points is based on a dynamic system that combines Yin-Yang balance, the 5 transporting points of the Nan Jing, and hologram/imaging formats. The idea behind the strategy is to cover all 12 main meridians and create a global balance in the body. Again, my clinical experience shows how powerful my invention proved on my patients. Now, I receive positive feedback from practitioners all over the world who use this method with tremendous success.

Editor: What do you enjoy most about your work?

Dr. Tan: I love teaching and I love treating my patients. Both of these areas are tremendously rewarding. Although I travel often to teach at seminars, I do not want to leave my clinical practice. I need to keep practicing in order to have hands-on experience with real patients. Otherwise, I will just be teaching a bunch of theories without real wisdom to back it up. I have such a passion for teaching and it stimulates my creativity. I enjoy sharing my knowledge and also learning from my students. This constant interaction allows me to continue to expand on my past teachings and always think of new ideas. So, I enjoy the combination of both, and it keeps me very busy. Currently, I travel about 20-25 weekends out of the year to give seminars, and I treat about 30 patients per day in my clinic.

Editor: It sounds like you have a very busy life. How do you stay so healthy?

Dr. Tan: It all comes back to BALANCE! I work very hard, but I also play very hard. I believe in enjoying myself and I try not to take life too seriously. I also regenerate my energy every day by doing Qi Gong. I also teach Qi Gong because I want my students to understand that they need to take care of themselves. As practitioners, we give out much of our energy each day. It is wise to have a way to replenish your energy or you will be unhealthy and you will have nothing to give.

Editor: We are looking forward to seeing more of you in the future. What future projects are you working on?

Dr. Tan: I have a great interest in *Ba Zi*, which is a form of Chinese Astrology that I have been studying in depth for a number of years. A Ba-Zi reading gives an astonishingly accurate portrait of a person's life according to the year, month, day and hour of birth. In order to perform a Ba-Zi reading, these four specific times are arranged in four columns or pillars, the so-called "Pillars of Destiny." I am now combining my acupuncture knowledge with Ba Zi astrology. I am doing research to see if I can come up with a constitutional treatment strategy for each individual. In essence, I am combining two of my great passions, and I am excited to see what will develop in the future.