

Book Review: Ear Acupuncture.

Author: Beate Strittmatter MD.

First published in 1956. This revised version: 2008.

ISBN: 978-3-13-131962

Publisher: Thieme, New York, USA.

Web Site: www.thieme.com

Review date: 10th. January 2011.

Reviewer: Paul Hysen PhD.

Contact: paulhysen@traditionalmedicine.net.au

This book is a standard 13cm x 19cm sized pocket book comprised of 438 pages, if one includes the preface and content pages.

It is printed on high quality paper which enables the compact thickness of 2cm, and it weighs in at around 580 grams.

Nevertheless it sits easy in one's hand and the first impression is therefore that of a compact, high quality book.

On quickly leafing through the book I noted that the content comes in three colours: black, mid-brown and light-brown. This no-nonsense colour scheme presents a book that comes right to the point, not only in its text, diagrams and tables, but also as regards its layout.

What stood out first of all is that this is a book for practising acupuncturists, or at least for the advanced student of acupuncture, as there are no basic treatment instructions and only the more advanced clinical aspects of needling techniques are discussed.

In addition, the book has a somewhat modern medical flavour, but more about that later.

After a closer examination, it quickly becomes clear that this book is composed of three distinct sections that cover totally different areas of ear acupuncture; it is actually three books in one.

The largest section is by far the first; it deals with the reflex points in the ear in accordance with the principles set out by the discoverer and originator of ear acupuncture, Paul Nogier (1908-1996). Since Paul Nogier's discovery of ear acupuncture in 1965, a great deal more research and work has been done on ear acupuncture; to the extent that there are now over 240 known ear acupuncture points and reflex regions in each ear.

The book has explanatory text that gives the nature, function and the location of each region or point and in most cases also provides comprehensive treatment information. In addition there is a clear diagram on the facing page that shows the location of the region or point referred to in the text.

The second section of the book only comprises 16 pages, but they are very important pages indeed. Here are described and represented by a number of diagrams the points that comprise the "mini" meridians of the ears, which are effectively a copy of the classical body meridians.

Then thirdly and finally there is a section composed of a total of 73 pages that deals with treatment approaches. Of course such a short section can never provide a comprehensive set of instructions on the clinical use of ear acupuncture. But it never attempts to do this. It rather selects some of the better examples of treatment by ear acupuncture in the form of small, concise instructive treatises that cover conditions that are particularly relevant to ear acupuncture treatment methods. Each treatise is set out, as may be expected by the quality of the previous sections, in a concise manner; but more importantly, in many instances the potential clinical value of the proposed treatment is also discussed, thus providing an invaluable guideline to the practitioner.

All-in-all, I only have one gripe, and that is that the book compares the function of many points with those of modern pharmaceutical drugs.

I found this distracting, firstly because acupuncture and drugs are two vastly different things, and although Governing Vessel 20 has often been referred to as the "valium" point by acupuncturists because needling this has an anti-anxiety effect on the patient, this is of course a tongue-in-cheek remark and no-one would seriously suggest that if a person has Governing Vessel 20 needled, they should subsequently refrain from driving a car or operating heavy machinery.

In addition, the drug – acupuncture point comparisons given in the book are rarely accurate, it takes some imagination to relate many of the drugs mentioned to the actual function of the particular ear acupuncture point; in fact my concern is that this association could easily lead to wrong perceptions as regards the actual therapeutic application of ear acupuncture.

In summary, this book has failings that are irritating, but they do not take away from the overall value inherent in its wealth of information, which is enhanced by its concise and easy to follow layout and text. Because of this it has quickly become the book I reach for first, when checking up on the nature and location of an ear acupuncture point; it has in fact become my "Materia Medica of ear acupuncture".

In view of this it would be rather unfair of me not to recommend it to others, although perhaps not unreservedly, as an excellent source of information.