



Integrating The Time-Honored Healing Art Of Jin Shin Jyutsu Into Western And Surgical Practice

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It makes sense to us on a human level that the effects of psychological states such as stress and depression, and the effects of events such as major surgery, grief and trauma, can influence health. Mom was right. Stress can make us more prone to the common cold. A body of research in the expanding field of psychoneuroimmunology supports the mind-body connection. Stress, broadly defined, is believed to be a contributing factor in the vast majority of illnesses and psychological states that arrive on the doctor's doorstep.

Guiding patients towards safe, effective therapies to rally their own healing system and reduce pain, fear and stress responses can be a rewarding experience for all. One such therapy is the respected touch therapy called Jin Shin Jyutsu (pronounced "Jit-su"). It is not inaccurate to describe Jin Shin Jyutsu as a highly developed form of acupressure therapy (but without "pressure") or energy therapy. Skilled practitioners trained in this non-invasive healing art work in hospitals and in out-patient settings in collaboration with medical doctors, surgeons, psychiatrists and other health providers.

Two years ago, in a pioneering collaboration at California Pacific Medical Center with Ricki Pollycove, MD (gynecology), Loren Eskenazi, MD and Kay Young MD (reconstructive/plastic surgery), and myself (integrative medicine therapies), we began making available to patients the healing art of Jin Shin Jyutsu, imagery/hypnotherapy, therapeutic massage and psychotherapy services. These services are provided by private practitioners associated in our offices, who also see patients referred by doctors in the community and self-referrals.

In our offices, Jin Shin Jyutsu treatments and self-care exercises are provided to medical and surgical patients suffering from a wide range of complaints, such as fatigue, pain (chronic and acute), anxiety, nausea, symptoms exacerbated by stress, respiratory disorders, insomnia, gynecological and sexual dysfunction, cardiac complaints, complications of surgery and negative side effects of medications (e.g. anesthesia, chemotherapy, radiation and anti-depressant medications).

Other Bay Area centers have integrated touch therapy in overall patient care. Marin Oncology Associates offers an integrative oncology practice in which Jin Shin Jyutsu is the cornerstone integrative therapy in helping their cancer patients. Also offered are imagery, nutrition counseling, psychotherapy and on-going classes. Kaiser Permanente offers regular acupressure self-help classes for all of its members, as well as a variety of stress management, yoga and other self-help classes.

Jin Shin Jyutsu, a physio-philosophy, has the goal of awakening and invigorating the body's life energy ("chi", "ki", "prana" in other languages) along specific circulation flows ("meridians") to promote optimum health and happiness. It is a comprehensive and well-organized system that is taught worldwide, and has been incorporated into the practices of many health providers (such as nursing, physical therapy, respiratory therapy, chiropractic, medicine, bodywork, etc.).

Jin Shin is distinguished from many complementary and alternative (CAM) therapies in three significant ways: (1) It is non-invasive and pain-free; (2) There is a rich body of self-help exercises which even the sickest patient can perform in bed; and (3) It supports whatever treatment regime the patient is undergoing. While bearing conceptual similarities and lineage with acupuncture and various touch therapies that incorporate deep tissue work or "energy" work, Jin Shin Jyutsu is an exceptionally gentle therapy that does not use needles, pressure or rubbing to realize the potential benefits. For the many people adverse to acupuncture needles or for whom pressure on the skin would be contraindicated, Jin Shin provides a safe method of working with the body's energy.

Medical research supports findings of benefits of acupressure/Jin Shin Jyutsu. For example, acupressure on acupoints was found to reduce post-operative pain (Felhendler, D; Lisander, B., Clinical Journal of Pain 1996). Lamkey, D. reported reduced stress response and anxiety for nurses receiving Jin Shin Jyutsu. Acupressure was found to be an effective adjunct to pulmonary rehabilitation in reducing dyspnea in COPD patients (Maa SH, Gauthier, D; Turner M. J. of Cardiopulm. Rehabil 1997). Acupressure was effective as a prophylaxis to reduce intraoperative nausea and for post-surgical nausea and vomiting, concluding it is a good alternative to conventional antiemetic treatment (Ferrara-Love, R; Sekeres, L.; Bircher, NG, J. of Perianesthesia Nursing, 1996 and Fan, J. of Anesthesia and Analgesia).

Reported benefits for women undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer has prompted a research study, now underway, at the Complementary Medicine Research Institute at CPMC studying the effects of Jin Shin in reducing fatigue, nausea and improving quality of life (among other measures) during chemotherapy.

In the out-patient setting, patients referred for Jin Shin Jyutsu are typically seen once or twice a week for one-hour sessions with evaluation for continued sessions made on a case-by-case basis, and initial progress frequently reported within several sessions. Home practice self-help exercises are routinely taught and encouraged on a daily basis. Guided imagery, breathing exercises and massage are adjunctive supports, which this author often integrates into her sessions.

Surgery patients are encouraged to receive a minimum of three sessions closely spaced before surgery, with additional sessions post-operation in-hospital and during recovery, as needed. Providing Jin Shin treatments during surgery itself is not viewed by this practitioner as particularly advantageous to the patient and may create a burden on the surgical team. Surgeons report that patients who received Jin Shin seem to have a more relaxed outlook going into surgery, experience less nausea and GI complaints and recover faster than expected.

In the intensive care setting, patients are in a particularly fragile, anxious and weakened state. Frequent, short (15-20 min.) sessions are recommended and can be exceptionally helpful. In a trial program through CPMC's Institute for Health and Healing in which the author participated for several years at CPMC, patients awaiting a heart transplant were provided Jin Shin Jyutsu acupressure services on a twice weekly basis. These patients are at risk for numerous medical complications, physical discomforts, as well as psychological setbacks. While the sample size was small, in feedback surveys patients reported often experiencing extensive benefits from the sessions, including: "helped dramatically reduce pain," "reduced anxiety and depression," "promoted deep sense of relaxation," "aided bowel functioning," "helped reduce physical discomforts in the body," "Helped improve mood," and "aided restful sleep at night," as examples.

Patients report feeling deeply relaxed after a Jin Shin session. The patient lies supine on a massage table or in the hospital bed, or in any other comfortable position. Only shoes and tight jewelry, belts, etc. are removed. The practitioner's hands are placed on or under the person's body (over clothing). A determination of the procedures to be applied is made, and the session begins. Patients typically pay on a fee-for-service basis, although some health plans provide reimbursement.

Finding ever more effective ways of collaborating and integrating beneficial traditional approaches to healing with conventional medicine will assist each of us in reaching our potential for health and happiness.

Pennie Sempell is a practitioner certified in Jin Shin Jyutsu, therapeutic massage and hypnotherapy, with additional clinical experience in relaxation training, meditation, stress management and biofeedback. She regularly treats patients referred by physicians and psychologists for acute in-hospital and out-patient care. Additionally, Ms. Sempell is involved as a co-researcher at the Complementary Medicine Research Institute at CPMC in a Jin Shin Jyutsu/breast cancer study. For more information, call (415) 731.3611 or Penniegram@aol.com.

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