

Introduction to Japanese style acupuncture and moxibustion techniques

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A popular modern-day acupuncture needle insertion technique used in Japan was originally developed by Waichi Sugiyama during the Edo era. The widely used Japanese acupuncture needle, called a Goushin, is characteristically small in size (0.14-0.3mm in diameter) and very delicate. The needle, along with an insertion tube, is held between the thumb and index finger in the proper placement position, and lightly tapped on the head so that it penetrates the skin. In the next step, the insertion tube is removed and the lowest tip of the needle is pinched with the thumb and forefinger and inserted to the proper depth using the fingers of the other hand. This method is in popular use these days as a Japanese acupuncture needling technique and has become a standard for technical training. Advantages of this method include relatively little pain upon needle insertion, and the ability to control the range of stimulus from small to large according to the technique of the operator. Both of these advantages are particular to the Japanese method of needling.

The Japanese direct moxibustion method includes both scarring and non-scarring techniques. The introduction of moxibustion to Japan is unclear, but a medical book from Koma during the era of Emperor Kinmei includes a reference to acupuncture and moxibustion, making it at least 1400-1500 years old. Scarring moxibustion involves placing mugwort, or moxa, directly on the skin. Two types of moxa include high-quality moxa and warming moxa. High-quality moxa is used for scarring moxibustion, and warming moxa for non-scarring moxibustion. Scarring moxibustion involves three kinds of moxibustion: permeating heat moxibustion (Tounetsukyu), cauterizing moxibustion (Syousyakukyu), and suppurative moxibustion (Danoukyuu).

In this presentation, we introduce techniques and tools used in Japanese style acupuncture and moxibustion.