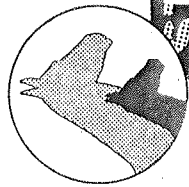


# Learning from ancient remedies



**STUD & STABLE**

**Sue Montgomery**

*‘When I started five years ago people were just polite. Now they are getting interested’*

**T**HE ancient Chinese healing skill of acupuncture has found its way to Newmarket, thanks to a Danish vet. Mogens Hoeltholt Hansen, who runs a large equine hospital in Jutland, has successfully treated several horses trained in the town this year, including a Classic winner.

Instead of a needle, Hansen uses a fine, powerful laser beam on his patients. "For certain sufferings, the curing percentage is well above 70 per cent," he said.

Hansen's specialist interest is back trouble and it was work in this area that led him to acupuncture. He said: "When I started five years ago people were just polite. Now they are getting interested."

The application of acupuncture, now increasingly recognised as a supplement to conventional treatment in human medicine, has been used for 5,000 years.

He said: "It dates back to approximately 3,000 years BC. The emperor Huang Ti is said to have used acupuncture in the year 2697 BC on his soldiers and horses to increase their staying power."

He stresses that most of his work is along conventional veterinary lines and that acupuncture is an extension of accepted laser treatment, normally used to help local pain.

He said: "Acupuncture is not a black magic thing. I do not go in for yin and yang, which the Chinese believe maintain the harmony of the universe."

"But the ancient principles of acupuncture are now revealed to be right by a modern understanding of neurophysiology."

Acupuncture is based on the fact that the source of pain, swelling or malfunction is not necessarily where it shows itself. And it is possible to effect a cure or relief by treating one of a number of 'trigger points' on the body. Hansen said: "The old Chinese noticed that when the body was ill, special points on the skin became sore, and it was always the same points for the same diseases. As still more points were detected and marked on the body, it turned out that they followed certain lines, called meridians."

Over the years Hansen has built up a 'map' of lines and trigger points on the horse. He treats his patients by stimulating



DANISH vet Mogens Hoeltholt Hansen, his methods a hit in Newmarket, treating a horse at his equine hospital in Denmark

so in the horse, who at the same time has to be an athlete. It is often an overlooked problem because the signs and symptoms are not as clear as they would be in a leg where heat and swelling would be obvious."

The causes of back trouble are many. A fall, a slip, or strain due to working when unfit are obvious. But it can also be due to an ill-fitting saddle, an unbalanced rider sitting crookedly or bouncing around, pain or injury elsewhere, causing the horse to carry himself awkwardly, or bad conformation.

A problem in the back can be the cause of trouble elsewhere, or the result of trouble elsewhere. Hansen said: "It is important that it is recognised whether it is a primary or secondary problem."

Hansen's laser acupuncture therapy is swift and involves no distress to the horse. Treating one of Wall's three-year-olds, he ran his hands deftly along certain lines on the neck, shoulder, back and quarters, starting behind the ears. He pressed certain points to see if the horse reacted.

The horse, intermittently lame behind, has been diagnosed as suffering from in-

its nerves, a complicated organ which directs, controls and co-ordinates an essential part of the body functions. Overburdening of the spinal column may cause pain and alteration of the functions not only in parts of the back and surrounding tissue, but also in tissue and organs located further away, but which obtain their supply of nerves from the area in the back where the suffering is.

"Back trouble may thus cause not only disturbances in the function of the limbs, but also the internal organs, for example the heart, lungs and gastro-intestinal system."

Throughout the Flat season Hansen has visited Newmarket regularly. One of his ports of call is Chris Wall's Wroughton House Stables, where Italian Group 1 winner Candy Glen proved the efficacy of the treatment. The colt's symptoms were stiffness and awkward movement; Hansen diagnosed and successfully treated displacement of the left sacro-iliac joint and resultant inflammation of the sciatic nerve.

Wall said: "Candy Glen never had any problems serious enough to prevent him running, but Mogens' treatment made sure

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He said: "It dates back to approximately 3,000 years BC. The emperor Huang Ti is said to have used acupuncture in the year 2697 BC on his soldiers and horses to increase their staying power."

"It turned out that by treating a point on the side of a soldier's knee, his marching distance could be increased by three miles a day and by treating the same point on the cavalry horses, their staying power could be increased accordingly."

One of the earliest medical textbooks in the world is Nei Ching, translated as the Yellow Emperor's Book of Internal Medicine. Hansen said: "It shows China was ahead of the world in the development of many areas."

Recognition of the therapeutic qualities of laser (light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation) are more recent. Laser treatment can achieve two things: improved tissue regeneration and pain relief. Hansen, who is a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons as well as Denmark's professional veterinary body, has put the two forms of therapy together.

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Over the years Hansen has built up a 'map' of lines and trigger points on the horse. He treats his patients by stimulating these. He said: "I look not at where the pain is, but where it isn't."

In humans, stimulation is normally carried out with fine needles inserted deep into the trigger point. With horses, Hansen uses a 'gun' which emits a fine beam of soft laser, which can be set to penetrate variable depths. He said: "It would be almost impossible practically to use needles with horses, and the laser gun is aseptic, painless and much more effective."

Hansen finds that acupuncture treatment is most effective in cases of lameness associated with the major joints—shoulder, elbow, hip and stifle—and the back. He said: "Sufferings by horses in those parts, especially the spinal column, are as frequent as by human beings but often neglected."

"The spinal column is not only a support apparatus for head, limbs and internal organs but, together with the spinal cord and

its nerves, a complicated organ which directs, controls and co-ordinates an essential part of the body functions. Overburdening of the spinal column may cause pain and alteration of the functions not only in parts of the back and surrounding tissue, but also in tissue and organs located further away, but which obtain their supply of nerves from the area in the back where the suffering is.

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Wall said: "Candy Glen never had any problems serious enough to prevent him running, but Mogens' treatment made sure that he went to the races 100 per cent rather than 99 per cent. Every working part was working, and the fact he was using himself properly meant he wasn't putting any abnormal strain on himself."

"I don't know if it was significant, but he didn't have treatment before the Mill Reef when he ran disappointingly. He had another session of acupuncture before the Gran Criterium, which he won. There are no problems with the treatment—even the touchiest fillies relax."

Another success is Life At The Top, three times a winner at two and placed in the Sun Chariot Stakes this year. Michael Swinburn, of Genesis Green Stud who leased the filly for her racing career, said: "Without this acupuncture treatment we wouldn't have got her on a racecourse this year."

Hansen said: "Back pain in people is a widespread problem, and it can be equally

so in the horse, who at the same time has to be an athlete. It is often an overlooked problem because the signs and symptoms are not as clear as they would be in a leg where heat and swelling would be obvious."

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The horse, intermittently lame behind, has been diagnosed as suffering from inflammation of four lumbar vertebrae and the roots of the sciatic nerve. Hansen applied the laser gun to various points on a line from the top of his neck. When it reached the lumbar region, the horse lifted and twitched his near hind as if he felt it tingling.

The use of laser acupuncture is in its early stages. Hansen said: "It is not a replacement for conventional veterinary treatment, but I am not afraid to use it as a supplement, perhaps combined with local laser radiation or chiropractic."

"I have also noticed that if certain points are initiated there is a reaction in the immune system, which helps resistance to viruses and bacterium infections, and even allergies. I believe that in the veterinary world we must always be looking for more knowledge."

