

## Can We Treat Nasal Congestion in Patients with Deviated Septum Without Performing Surgery?

Huang Wei Ling\*

MD Infectious Disease, General Practice, Nutrition, Acupuncture and Pain Management Specialist, Medical Acupuncture and Pain Management Clinic, Franca, São Paulo, Brazil

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**\*Corresponding Author:** Huang Wei Ling, MD Infectious Disease, General Practice, Nutrition, Acupuncture and Pain Management Specialist, Medical Acupuncture and Pain Management Clinic, Franca, São Paulo, Brazil.

### Abstract

**Introduction:** The nasal septum is made up of cartilage and bone. This bone can be off center, slightly deviated, and this condition is entitled deviated septum. Traditional Chinese medicine attributes the symptoms associated in Western medicine with nasal deviation to the external pathogens influence. According to them, problems in breathing related to the nose could be associated to invasion of Cold and Wind on the patient's body.

**Purpose:** This research aims to demonstrate that it is possible to treat nasal congestion in patients with deviated septum without the necessity of surgery.

**Case Report:** A case report of a 50-year-old male patient, in his first appointment he complained of nasal congestion in his left nasal passage especially on cold days, and he said that he was indicated for correction of his nasal septum deviation. He began his treatment with Chinese dietary counseling, auricular acupuncture and systemic acupuncture twice a week, and started to show improvement from the beginning of his treatment. The doctor orientated the patient to avoid drinking cold water, walking barefoot, sleeping undressed, being recommended to use at least one t-shirt for sleeping to cover the thorax.

**Results:** His treatment began in the winter, and he noticed that his nasal congestion rapidly disappeared and he never experienced the symptoms anymore, which was very different from previous years when during the winter he was severely congested especially on the left side. He is still being treated to maintain his nasal passages clear.

**Conclusion:** The use of acupuncture and Chinese dietary counseling, as well as awareness regarding the invasion of external pathogenic factors, could be an important option in patients with nasal congestion and deviated septum. The nasal congestion was due to invasion of Cold and Wind, according to traditional Chinese medicine.

**Keywords:** Nasal Congestion; Deviated Septum; Surgery

### Introduction

The nasal septum is made up of cartilage and bone. This bone can be off center, slightly deviated, and medically, this condition is entitled deviated septum [1].

Usually, the condition does not present symptoms, but when they appear, they appear as difficulties in breathing though the

nose, nasal congestions, sinus infections, nosebleeds, sleep problems, headache, and postnasal drip [1,2].

A study performed in India, found that neonatal deviated septum affected 20% of newborns. The problem also appeared to be more frequent in babies who experienced difficult deliveries [3].

The treatment depends from the different levels of the problem. In less severe cases no particular treatment is needed. For mild-

cases, the prescription are usually steroid sprays to reduce inflammation, nasal dilators, decongestion and saline irrigations [1-3].

For those with a more serious problem septoplasty is an option. It is a surgical procedure done entirely through the open nostrils. The procedure typically takes 1 to 2 hours and uses general or local anesthetic [4].

A study entitled *Nasal Septal Deviations: A Systematic Review of Classification Systems*, showed the different formats of the deviation, in order to classify the different ways of treatment and the severity, his explanation can be well summarized with the use of two images, both represented in figure 1 [1].

**Figure 1:** Format of septum deviations.

The right image shows a complete obstruction of one of the sides and is classified as one of the cases where the septoplasty is indicated. The left image shows the condition in "C" format, mainly, the treatment for these types of cases are done with topical medications or nasal dilators [1].

The surgery, despite very well recommended - the rate of success appeared to show improvement in pulmonary function and it is only recommended for those with severe nasal disruption [4,5].

It is also important to notice that not all people with deviated septum will present pathologies and problems related to it. It is estimated that up to 90% of people have some sort of deviated septum and not all them have symptoms [4,5].

Many times, in order to not recur to surgery, patients seek for other traditions and perspectives of medicine. Traditional Chinese medicine has been increasing its range of treatments and patients in the last decade, due to the impressive results in treating for the most varied pathologies [6].

Traditional Chinese medicine attributes the symptoms associated in Western medicine with nasal deviation to the external patho-

gens influence. According to TCM, problems in breathing related to the nose could be associated with invasion of Cold and Wind [6,7].

Elizabeth Craik, on the book *Hippocratic Corpus* discusses the significance of the influence of climatic factors on the diagnosis and treatment of diseases. The Yellow Emperor also states the importance of considering the influence of external pathogenic factor on the origin of the nasal congestion [8].

## Purpose of the Study

This research aims to demonstrate the use of Chinese dietary counseling and acupuncture as a good and safe technique in the treatment of nasal congestion before the recommendation of surgery in this case, as the deviated septum could be only one anatomical finding but not the cause of the symptom presented by the patient.

## Methods

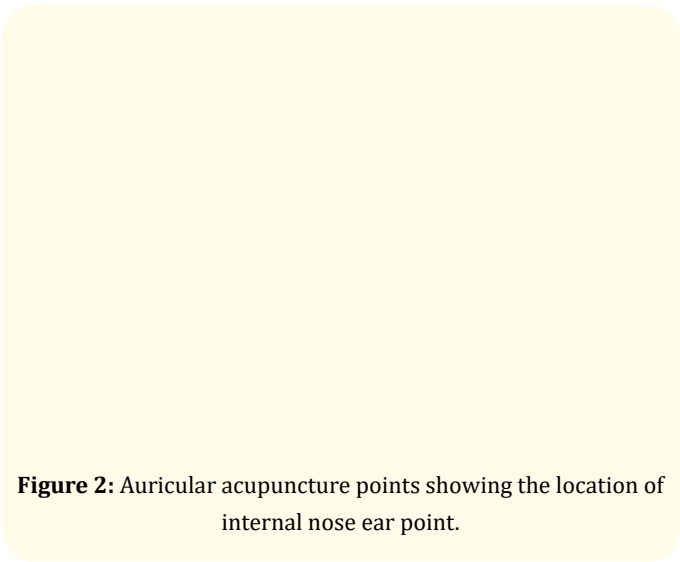
The methods used integrated a literature review of the deviated septum articles and studies, and a case report of a 50 years old patient.

## Case Report

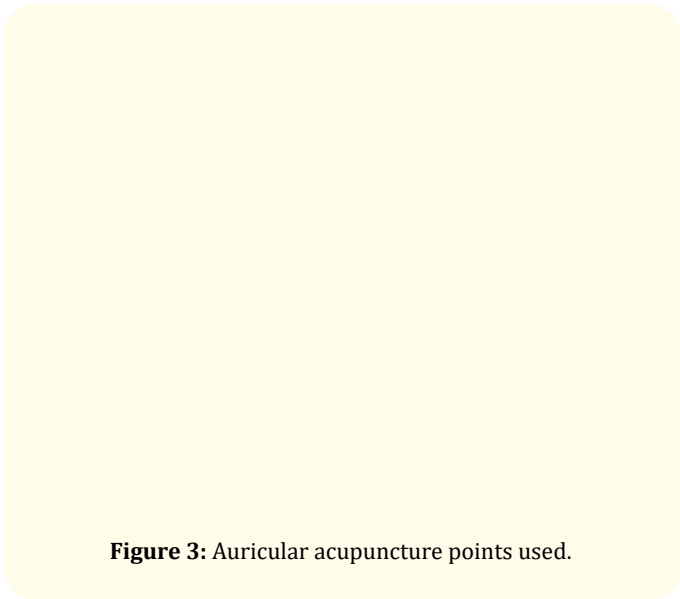
J.A.D., 50 years-old male patient, appeared for an appointment complaining of nasal congestion in his left nasal passage especially on cold days. Two years ago, he had been to an otolaryngologist because he had a throat problem with frequent infections which got worse during cold weather. He was prescribed high-concentrated medications, one of which was penicillin G benzathine for six months, which had not produced the desired effect. He was given medicine for acid reflux which also was to no avail. He was then recommended to a gastroenterologist who did many types of tests for acid reflux which had negative results. He looked for another otolaryngologist who diagnosed a deviated septum, and recommended surgery. His brother had undergone acupuncture treatment and told him to try this type of procedure before doing any kind of surgery. He began his treatment with two sessions a week, of systemic acupuncture and auricular acupuncture associated with apex ear bloodletting and started to show improvement since the beginning.

The acupuncture points used were LI4 bilateral; LI11 only on the left side; LI20 only on the left side. The auricular points were Shen-Men; Liver; Spleen; Lung; Large Intestine; Occiput; Internal

Nasal; Apex Ear Bloodletting, which were applied on the left ear, as demonstrated in figure 2 and 3.



**Figure 2:** Auricular acupuncture points showing the location of internal nose ear point.



**Figure 3:** Auricular acupuncture points used.

Results

The overall results were excellent. His treatment began in the winter, and he noticed that his nasal congestion rapidly disappeared and he never experienced the symptoms anymore, which was very different from previous years when during the winter he was severely congested especially on the left side. He is continuing his treatment to maintain his nasal passages clear.

Discussion

The metaphor of the tree

In the past years, the author has been publishing several studies, all-aiming to stablish the significance and effectiveness of an integral and individualized perspective, when treating patients for the most varied pathologies [9,10].

This idea started during the treatment of one specific patient in 2006. This patient was a 70-year-old male, who reported pain in the legs and was diagnosed with Kidney-*Yang* deficiency, according to TCM. He received treatment with Chinese dietary counselling, acupuncture and auricular acupuncture associated with apex ear bloodletting [9,10].

With the treatment done, the pain in the legs diminished and the patient was submitted to an interview after the treatment. In this interview, 30 days after the treatment, the patient revealed that his eye pressure had also lowered with the treatment, as his ophthalmologist confirmed. During the treatment, he had not reported to be treating glaucoma in the last 40 years with no improvement of his condition, that was always more than 40 mm Hg in both eyes. With the treatment performed, his intraocular pressure lowered to 17 mm Hg [9,10].

This interesting case became the cornerstone of the author studies in the field, trying to comprehend how the treatment based on the root of the problem could treat different diseases and symptoms simultaneously and using the same methods [9,10].

Now, specifically for nasal congestion, the treatment done in Western medicine nowadays on is an exclusively localized treatment [1].

The tree has a trunk with several branches. Each branch represents one medical specialty and each leaf coming out of each branch represent the symptoms and diseases of each specialty. The leaves and the branches are the visible part and the object of study and practice in the Western medical profession [9,10].

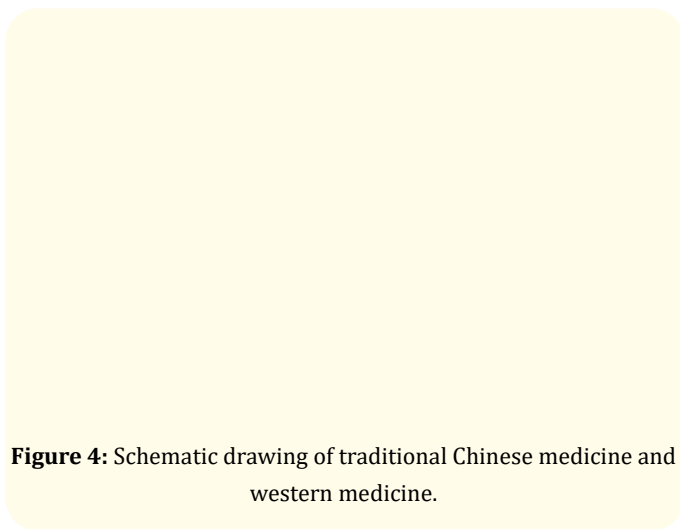
The focus is to treat each leaf in each specialty. The treatment proposed by the author aims to treat all the tree, through the root to reach a “health leaf” and observing that external pathogenic factors could be causing the symptoms on the patient, causing nasal congestion. After orientating the avoidance of exposure to Cold and Wind, the author performed treatment at the root level, correct-

ing energy imbalances which were weak, leading to the symptoms, due to invasion of external pathogenic factors during the night, as the patient had the habit of sleeping with no clothing, letting him unprotected against Cold and Wind, which invaded the body through the upper part [9,10].

In this root, there is energy that when balanced can generate health to the whole tree. The reason of this study is to address which are the energy alterations present in the root level, responsible for nasal congestion [9,10].

Around the tree, it is possible to see the external pathogenic factors (Wind, Cold, Heat, Dryness and Humidity). The first step when treating this patient was to take out the Cold and Wind which was invading the body, and after taking it out, tone the energy deficiency the patient is presenting on the root. When the energy is toned without taking out the invasion of the external pathogenic factors, the symptom of nasal congestion may worsen. If the external pathogenic factors are taken out but the energy imbalances of the patient are not treated, this invasion may happen several times, leading to nasal congestion symptoms [6-10].

The orientations regarding protection against external pathogenic factors is also of major significance, orientating the patient to not walk barefoot, not sleeping with the hair wet and mainly, covering the upper part of the chest and thorax with clothing to avoid the invasion of Cold and Wind. Even when the patient is covered with a blanket or sheet, the invasion may still happen. This is why it is so important to be wearing cloths which cover the chest and thorax area [6-10].



**Figure 4:** Schematic drawing of traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine.

## The main principles of traditional Chinese medicine *Yin and Yang*

*Yin* and *Yang* are the two opposite forces that are believed to be present in all phenomena in the world. For traditional Chinese medicine, the *Yin* and *Yang* is the first and major cornerstone to understand health, diagnosis and treatments [12,13].

The *Yin* and *Yang* was first referred to in the I Ching, a book written around 700 BC, one of the oldest books in the world, and widely known for containing a range of knowledge from the antique Chinese people [12,13].

The main principle represented by the *Yin* and *Yang* symbol and contained in its meaning is the idea of complementary and cyclical opposites. This idea came from the observation of different nature phenomena such as day and night, female and male, darkness and light, right and left, etc [12,13].

Through observation, Chinese wise men concluded all this phenomenon would behave in cycles. One was not able to exist without the other, and one side would always start growing even when opposed to the other side. As an Arabic proverb states: The darkest moment of the night is the one, which comes before the sunrise. There is a variation of *Yin* and *Yang* energy during night and day, and the intensity of *Yin* energy is bigger during the night, when there is intensity of *Yin*, the *Yang* is weaker. *Yin* represents Cold energy and *Yang* represents hot energy, and the patient may not perceive this invasion of Cold when sleeping. It is common for the patients to wake up with symptoms of nasal congestion after exposure to Cold and Wind during the night [12-14].

The figure 5 explains how all these ideas are contained in the symbol.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, *Yin* and *Yang* are composed by four aspects: they are opposites, they are interdependent, they are mutually transformative, one always transforming into the other in a cyclical way, they are mutually consuming as well, because one side is always consuming the other, aiming to increase [12,13].

In TCM, sleep is part of the natural rhythm of *Yin* and *Yang* in the body. In the concept of *Yin-Yang*, *Yin* represents passive forces while *Yang* represents active forces [12,13].

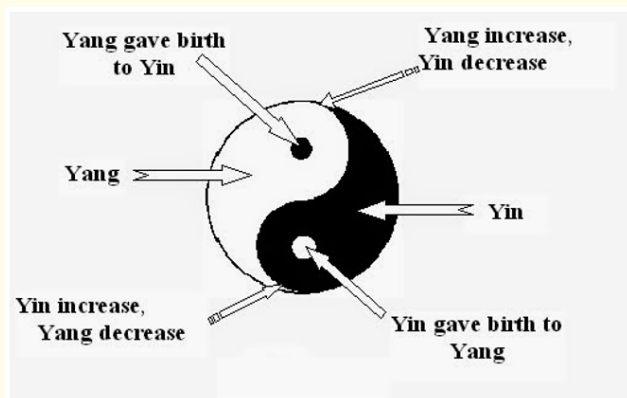


Figure 5: Yin and Yang explanation.

The ancients observed two phases of constant cyclical change where *Yin* changes into *Yang* and back into *Yin* again (Figure 6). From 6 AM to 12 PM, the *Yang* energy is increasing until 12 PM corresponds to Utmost *Yang*, from 12 PM to 6 PM it corresponds to *Yang* within *Yin*, from 6 PM to 12 AM, the *Yin* energy is increasing until 12 AM corresponding to Utmost *Yin*. From 12 AM to 6 AM the *Yin* energy became *Yang* again, restarting the cycle. As always this is a continuous movement, and never static [12,13].



Figure 6: Yin and Yang cycle.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, the *Yin* and *Yang* energy are present and are substantially important inside the body. We all have *Yin* and *Yang* energies, and many of our daily habits, stressful ways of life and other different causes can imbalance our *Yin* and *Yang* energy in four different ways [12,13].

There are four different types of energy imbalances: 1. Excess of *Yin*; 2. Excess of *Yang*; 3. Deficiency of *Yin*; 4. Deficiency of *Yang*. Many symptoms and pathologies can be explained by energy imbalances related to the *Yin* and *Yang* forces [14].

*Yin* is considered materialized energy and *Yang* is related to function. The importance of the comprehension of the *Yin* and *Yang* here, is to optimize the way traditional Chinese medicine aims to see the patient as a whole, taking in consideration internal and external influences for diagnosis. For example, the external pathogens, or unbalanced emotions [6].

#### External pathogenic factors: Wind, cold, heat, dryness and dampness

Usually, the pathogenic external factors should not influence the body. Skin, bones, muscles, month and tongues should be able to protect the body against these forces. However, when the body becomes vulnerable because of other energy imbalances, previously explained, these pathogens can influence the body negatively [6].

The pathogens are wind, cold, heat, dryness and dampness.

- Cold is a *Yin* pathogenic factor and causes sudden onset of symptoms of chilliness, headache, and body aches. Cold can damage *Yang* energy.
- Damp is a *Yin* pathogenic factor that causes sluggishness, lethargy, sticky discharges.
- Heat is a *Yang* pathogenic factor. Heat and Fire are usually interchangeable terms. Heat symptoms include fever, inflammation, constipation, and dry skin.
- Summer Heat is a *Yang* pathogenic factor. It depletes *Qi* and body fluids, which can cause dehydration and exhaustion.
- Dryness is a *Yang* pathogenic factor. Dryness is closely related to Fire/Heat but involves more drying of bodily fluids. Symptoms include dry eyes, dry nose, dry mouth, dry cough.

In the case of this specific patient and his symptom, nasal congestion, the pathogens associated to it are Wind, Cold and Dampness. As already described in the case report, the patient had a habit to sleep not wearing nothing and not covering himself. Therefore, during night, he was completely vulnerable to Cold and Wind. Therefore, he would wake up in the morning with problems in breathing, interpreted by Western medicine as caused by the nasal deviation, when it was actually caused by invasion of external

pathogenic factors inside the body, which were eased by the lack of energy on the *root-level* [3-6].

When combining this with his already present energy imbalances, the external pathogenic factors would influence the body negatively [6].

With the use of acupuncture, he was able to take out the Cold and Wind which had invaded the body and on a second moment, the low energy was able to be rebalanced, making his body stronger to defend itself from the external pathogens, combined with the protection of the body with warm clothes and the avoidance of Wind, he was able to improve his nasal congestion symptoms without the necessity of topical treatment and surgery [15,16].

### Traditional Chinese medicine and deviated septum

TCM understands the nose-related symptoms with an internal problem in the body energy associated with the influence of external factors, such as Wind and Cold [6].

According to the Xu Wing, Lungs energy problems are associated with the hollow organ of the nose. Therefore, nose related problems many times will symbolize an imbalance in the *Yin* energy of the Lungs [6].

As the nose is the external sensorial organ related to the lungs, it is the first one to be affected by the diseases and symptoms associated with Wind and Cold, and the last one to be healthy again [1-6].

### Acupuncture

Now that we understood how the external pathogens influence the body, and how the body is formed by a range of different energies, it becomes easier to understand the philosophy used by traditional Chinese medicine to explain acupuncture [15,16].

Acupuncture has been used by the Oriental traditions for more than 2.500 years. The main idea is that the points used, would be external points where the energy of the body concentrates, and putting pressure on these specific points with the use of needles, it is possible to reestablish the balance of the energy flow, therefore curing a range of diseases, symptoms and varied pains [15,16].

Acupuncture is recognized as a medical specialty in Brazil since 1995 by the Federal Medical Council [15,16].

### Auricular acupuncture

Auricular acupuncture is a variant of systemic acupuncture, not based in the use of needles all over the body, but focusing treatment in the ear. The ear was specifically chosen by a group of German doctors, which understood the ear as a reproduction of the human fetus, presenting in itself specific points related to all the body [17,18].

In 2015, a Canadian neurologist discovered the existence of varied body maps in the surface of the brain, with the creation of microsystem spread all over the body, with capacity to send to the brain different stimulus related to different parts of the body, using the scheme of auricular acupuncture. The points and its relation the anatomical form of the human body is better represented in figure 7 [17,18].

**Figure 7:** Auricular acupuncture and anatomy.

### Arndt-Schultz law

The rule states that for all substances, small doses stimulate, moderate doses inhibit and overdoses kill [19,20].

This idea was based on the Arndt Schultz law. According to this law, the use of high-concentrated drugs will reduce the patient's vital energy that was already low [19,20].

The treatment that is done nowadays with high-concentrated medications can be one of the reasons of the continuous low energy level [19,20].



One of the reason of continuous low energy level with nasal congestion, predisposing him to the invasion of Cold and Wind and worsening the nasal congestion symptoms [19,20].

The graph of the Arndt-Schultz law can be seen in figure 8.

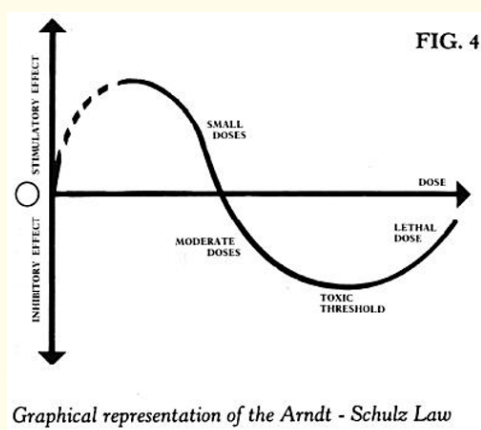


Figure 8: Arndt-Schultz law.

### Traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine - Yin and Yang metaphor

Currently, Western and traditional Chinese medicine are different for most physicians around the world. However, they can be integrated. In figure 9, a metaphor of Yin and Yang as the different kinds of medicine was created. For the adequate treatment of nasal congestion due to deviated septum, it is important to associate traditional Chinese medicine and Western medicine, so the patient can treat the symptoms and the root of the problem, which are the invasion of Cold and Wind due to the energy imbalances presented by this patient [6-13].

Figure 9: Traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine metaphor.

### Conclusion

The use of traditional Chinese medicine tools and reasoning can reduce or treat patients with nasal congestion without submit the patient to surgery, according to the case report. As 90% of the population has deviated septum and the problem only affects a small percentage of people, this creates a possibility to questioning the need of surgery in the majority of the cases and search for different ways of treatment.

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