

AKABANE

In Traditional Chinese Medicine illness is caused by imbalances within the 12 energy channels called meridians. Acupuncture and herbal formulations can be quite effective in treating imbalances, but identifying complicated, interwoven patterns can be difficult. In cases like these, such as chronic internal disorders, I am a big fan of using a Japanese acupuncture technique called Akabane.

Akabane, named for the person who developed the technique, Kobe Akabane, implements another technique called moxibustion over acupuncture points near the ends of the fingers and toes. Essentially, a smoldering bundle of moxa (comes from Japanese *mogusa* (艾), also known as the herb *mugwort*) is passed rhythmically over these points to obtain a numerical value of sensitivity. The twelve meridians are bilateral; so a value obtained on the left can be compared to the value obtained on the right and thereby determine imbalances. For example, the termination of the lung channel near the inside edge of the thumb on the left, can be compared to the corresponding point on the opposite hand. Ideally there would be low numbers on both sides, but if the numbers on either or both sides are high, this means that there is an imbalance.



Once numerical values are obtained, it becomes clear which channels are out of balance. Needles are inserted in very precise locations along the spine where the lung, large intestine, stomach, spleen, etc. channels are represented, and the patient is left to rest and allow his/her natural healing to occur. The final step is to recheck the channels on the fingers and toes that registered high numbers previous to the treatment. If the treatment was successful, the numbers will be reduced and closer in value between the left and right side of the body.

Akabane is not only great to use if a person is experiencing illness, but also to identify imbalances that have not yet manifested as illness. Avoiding illness altogether can be a good thing!