



Back ailments

Back ailments – what are they? The sovereignty to define and the right to assign names is still in the hands of classic orthopaedics. Ailments of the back are diagnosed and treated as *Osteochondrosis*, (degeneration of bones and cartilage), as *spondylarthrititis* (degenerative disease of the small vertebral joints), as *prolapse of intervertebral disks*, a *vertebral canal that is too narrow*, *spondylolisthetic spine*, etc. So the doctor focuses on the skeleton and looks for abnormalities with the aid of X-rays and newer imaging techniques. When dislocations or deformations are found, the ailments are ascribed to these. The damaged parts are then repaired through surgical intervention. Or the patient is referred to a chiropractor who knows how to correct skeletal damage manually from the outside. How the efficacy of this method can be explained is a highly controversial subject. An alternative explanation is that it is not so much that the surface of the joint is reset which relieves or alleviates the pain but, more important, the fast relaxation of permanently cramped, deeper lying muscles through the underlying proprioceptive reflex.

Chinese medicine opens even a further horizon. Beyond the subject of muscular tension, the state of tissue also plays a role. Metabolism processes in conjunction with excretory processes are also taken into consideration. And finally, the individual history of the back ailment experienced now is followed. In many cases, the origin of severe back pain lies in problematical courses of infection which may have originated in childhood. The doctors at the *Klinik am Steigerwald* diagnose in the widely extended Chinese horizon and treat with corresponding methods.

From the Bones and Joints to the Muscular System

Abnormal positions and "wearing" of bones and joints cannot be sufficiently explained only by mechanical models. They may be caused or intensified by defective muscle tone. Such states also embody the psychic state. The psyche is linked to the skeleton through the muscles. Everyone has heard about pain in the small of the back that occurs under emotional stress, tension in the neck when under pressure to perform, etc. This results in one pole, the psychomotor movements. Under unfavourable conditions this can lead to dystonia, a negative next-to-each-other of over-tense and relaxed areas of the muscular system. Efforts to treat are focused on eutony, a balanced state of muscle tension that gives a feeling of well-being. Acupuncture can help here as well as numerous other conducive physical therapeutic procedures. At the *Klinik am Steigerwald*, not only acupuncture and moxibustion (heating of points with moxa) are used but also the following procedures: shiatsu, Tuina massage, psychotonic after Glaser, cranio-sacral therapy, foot reflex zone massage and many others.

The other pole is muscle metabolism. Here the psychic factor is no longer seen, only the fixed, incorrect position – the hard, tensed muscle, myogelosis – dominates the field. Disturbances in circulation and the accumulation of metabolic waste products occur in addition. Inflammation begins its attack and the result is pain and, in turn, tenseness. The administration of pain killers and inflammation blockers, injections, etc. promise alleviation but are misleading because calming inflammation relieves the pain but does not usually solve the problem.

Accumulation of Metabolic Waste Products: Fluids

If you ask how joints wear out or why intervertebral disk capsules are prone to bursting, you also need to take the state of tissue into consideration. The state of tissue is highly dependent on circulation and the

quality of the "fluids", i.e. the blood, lymph, and the intercellular environment. Tissue can only maintain its strength, elasticity and adaptability if the muscles and connective tissues are well supplied and the waste products disposed of properly. The wonderful effect of fasting on back ailments shows how important this dimension is. Also helpful, especially in an acute case, are external procedures that are conducive to treatment such as cupping or the application of leeches.

This is the point where intervention with Chinese medicinal formulations begins. Backaches in the lumbar region are treated by treating the abdomen, not the back. Regulation of intestinal functions is the key to the therapy. In the viewpoint of Chinese medicine, pain in the pelvic region and legs, paragesia or a feeling of heaviness result from excretory processes that have not been properly concluded. The same applies to symptoms in the head and neck. The concept finds massive confirmation through the success rate in treating hormone dependent back ailments in women. Re-regulation of hormone rhythms can work wonders for back ailments. Hormone preparations are counter-indicated.

Inflammation: Heteropathy

Inflammation must also be seen in a much wider horizon. Experience has shown that a cold and lumbago or a cough and inflammation of a joint occur in a time relationship. A diagnostician can gain important information from such a relationship by means of the approximately two thousand year old concept of heteropathy. Its key statement is that inflammatory processes that have not healed remain in the body as a hidden drive and overlie the control processes of our immune system. A chronically simmering cold that has not gone away, for example, can cause and uphold inflammatory processes in the lumbar vertebra area. To proceed according to the concept of heteropathy requires patient therapeutic work with the aid of Chinese medicinal therapy. Step for step, the seat of inflammation must be found and the infection that has not healed located and brought back to life. The goal of therapy has been achieved when the pain in the small of the back completely disappears after a strong, productive cold.

Success of Therapy

The *Klinik am Steigerwald* predominately treats patients with problematical illnesses. The patients referred to the clinic because of back ailments have often been operated on many times and are treated for pain.

Comprehensive documentation of all stationary treatment, which has been compiled since 1999, shows that an improvement quota of more than 70 % is achieved by the day the patient is released. The improvement essentially remains stable during the 12-month follow-up observation period. At the same time, pain medication could be reduced by more than 50 % on average.

Acupuncture and the related moxibustion, a number of physiotherapeutic methods, Japanese baths, other procedures conducive to treatment and, as a central methodical pillar, Chinese medicinal therapy, are used.

Treatment is difficult in the following cases:

- Patients who have been taking pain killers, cortisone, psychopharmacologic drugs and similar medicines for a very long time.
- When back pain is only the tip of the iceberg under which another illness such as an old manic depression is hidden.
- The patient has no patience.
- Heart function is so poor that the supply of blood reserves is not sufficient for therapy and the healing processes.