

# Energy medicine: Futuristic healing with ancient roots

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The study of energy medicine is the study of the “many working parts lacking visible connections.” The forces and fields that connect organ to organ, body to mind, and mind to nature are not always visible. This invisibility doesn’t mean they don’t exist. It may only mean we haven’t looked for them or haven’t yet developed the technology to objectively see, feel, or measure these interconnective forces.

The traditional definition refers to energy as “the capacity to do work” or as “a measurement of activity.” This meaning is appropriate in conceptualizing energy medicine as long as the definition of “work” or “activity” not only includes the gross changes in biochemical and physiological systems but also the changes in energy levels and field phenomena that affect human health. Modern understanding from chaos and complexity theories confirms that even subtle changes in energy levels and field phenomena have the capacity to catalyze significant biological transformations.

At the same time that energy medicine practitioners have begun to explore the fields and forces within the organism that have self-organizing and self-healing capacities, practitioners of modern medicine have begun to recognize self-regulating processes within the organism that work to defend and heal the individual.

Both groups are perhaps uncovering the same field phenomena. Whatever one calls this self-healing/self-regulating capacity, this inherent defensive and survival strategy helps the organism act with wisdom in adapting to all stresses, and to heal and transform itself as it acquires greater complexity and biological strength.

Ultimately, the concepts of energy medicine are futuristic, even though many of the most popular modern-day energy medicine practices are hundreds or even thousands of years old. Thinking of the health and life of living organisms in the light of energetics and field phenomena represents an important shift of perspective, and a predictable evolutionary step in the development of science and medicine.

## **Energy medicine East and West**

This invisible yet ubiquitous self-healing/self-regulating system or field within the organism has been given various names at different times in history and in different cultures.

Hippocrates called it “physis” (from which the word “physician” was derived); Paracelsus called it “archeus”; the modern-day scientist and discoverer of vitamin C, Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, called it “syntropy” (which he defines as “the drive in matter to perfect itself”); the Chinese have referred to it as “ch’i”; the yogis as “prana”; homeopathic physicians—“vital force”; and naturopathic physicians—“vis medicatrix naturae” (translated as “the healing power of nature”).

Although reference to an energy flow within the organism may sound esoteric to some people, it’s equally difficult for others to consider the body to be some type of biochemical machine. As famed science and science fiction writer Isaac Asimov once wrote: “Science theories tend to fit the intellectual fashions of our times.” Concepts of energy in medicine and healing are at once ancient and futuristic. It, indeed, may be time for the present to catch up with the past and the future.

Before microscopes were developed, many people had difficulty believing in the existence of bacteria. It’s not surprising that many people today have difficulty accepting the possibility of an energy system within the body since, like the invisible microbes before Leeuwenhoek’s times, we haven’t yet developed the technology to see it.

As science develops more and more sophisticated technologies that help us observe the action of smaller and smaller processes (cells, then intracellular parts, then molecules, and then atoms), it seems obvious that understanding energy processes and fields will be a natural evolution for scientific endeavors.

It's not an easy task to assess energy flow within the human body. Many of the health practices that are based on this type of assessment have taken hundreds or thousands of years to develop into coherent workable systems. Acupuncture, for example, has developed over the past 2-3,000 years, and its international popularity and stature is significant and undeniable. In order to evaluate the status of human energies, the acupuncturist uses pulse diagnosis with other diagnostic tools.

The quantity and quality of this energy flow informs the practitioner about the degree of pathological penetration and suggests the susceptibility of the person to certain conditions prior to their actual manifestation.

The five-element theory in Chinese medical practice along with other important principles of healing can guide the acupuncturist to finding the significant acupuncture points on the body that will balance the ch'i, thereby increasing or restoring its quantity and/or quality and augmenting the healing process.

Understanding how meteorologists predict the weather may actually be a useful metaphor for a better understanding of the practical workings of the energy flowing through the body.

Meteorologists predict the weather by measuring wind patterns and high and low air pressure. In this way, they predict where clouds will go and if and where it will rain. Wind and air pressure are forces, or energies, and if experts ignore these invisible forces and only watch and evaluate those elements of nature that can be seen (clouds), their skills at predicting weather will be embarrassingly poor. By understanding and observing how energy flows, experts can then predict how matter will be influenced and how it will behave.

Likewise, acupuncturists can predict disease processes when too much or too little energy pervades specific meridians. Acupuncturists use their needles to help move the ch'i from areas where there is much to areas that are undernourished, creating more balance and health. Understanding and working with bodily energies is not just some "woo-woo" concept but has practical diagnostic and therapeutic value.

In a parallel fashion, homeopathic medicine has spread to virtually every country in the world, and is often considered a Western energy medicine. Like their Chinese counterparts, homeopaths utilize a detailed body-mind symptom analysis to assess a person's constitutional state of health. The person's health is evaluated by assessing obvious and subtle symptoms, with greater emphasis placed on those unique symptoms that differentiate one person's disease from another.

Homeopaths commonly inquire about a person's sensitivity to hot or cold temperature, influences of time of day or night on health, motion or position of the body, food desires or aversions, sleeping habits, sweating patterns, emotional or mental states, and how each of these phenomena influence individual symptoms and a person's overall state of health. In so doing, homeopaths treat each person and his or her disease and unique syndrome of the disease.

For more than 200 years homeopaths internationally have confirmed that sick people have a hypersensitivity to a specific medicinal substance that, if given to healthy people in toxic doses, will cause the similar symptoms that the sick person is experiencing. Like acupuncture and other energy systems of medicines, the heightened power and effect of those homeopathic medicines that have undergone greater potentizations (the process of serial dilution with vigorous shaking in-between dilutions) may be the result of what the homeopaths call the "vital force" becoming sensitive to and resonant with the medicinal agent.

Because symptoms of illness are adaptive and defensive responses of the body to fight infection and/or adapt to stress, homeopathic medicines are matched and selected for their ability to mimic and augment this effort to elicit a healing response, thus leading some people to refer to homeopathy as "medical aikido" and "medical biomimicry." In Part 2 of this article, I'll take a look at magnetic fields and the human body, as well as ancient and modern applications of energy medicine.