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Originally published in *Massage & Bodywork* magazine, April/May 2000. Copyright 2003. Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals. All rights reserved.

Among the panoply of alternative approaches to wellness, Jin Shin Jyutsu® is emerging as a complementary therapy offered to patients in conventional medical practices. As part of a multi-disciplinary group practice in which I participate at California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco, Jin Shin Jyutsu (pronounced "Jit-su") has provided significant relief to patients suffering from a variety of complaints, while easily supporting whatever treatment regime their medical doctors may have prescribed. It has even been used in some of the most delicate situations -- specifically, with pre- and post-operative heart transplant patients in extended intensive care hospitalization.

Jin Shin Jyutsu can be described as a time-honored healing art involving gentle application of hands on the body according to established procedures (addressing particular circulation pathways in a consistent, sequential pattern). It is intended to help harmonize and balance the vital energy of the whole person -- mind, body and spirit -- thereby rallying the body's own healing mechanisms. While bearing conceptual similarities and lineage with acupuncture, acupressure and massage, Jin Shin Jyutsu is an exceptionally gentle, non-invasive therapy that works without the use of needles, pressure or rubbing. It is fair to describe this bodywork as a highly developed form of acupressure therapy.

Japanese in origin, the phrase "Jin Shin Jyutsu" translates as "the art of the Creator in the person of compassion." This is a healing art based upon a natural, innate ability to harmonize ourselves using touch. For thousands of years, ancient peoples used this awareness both to heal themselves and others. Over time, however, this awareness diminished until it was all but forgotten. In the early 1900s, Japanese scholar and sage Jiro Murai recovered Jin Shin Jyutsu and trained students in this comprehensive body of knowledge.

How Does It Work?

Jin Shin Jyutsu is used to stimulate or awaken the movement of vital energy (known also as "chi," "ki" or "prana") along 52 "safety energy locks" (SELS) - 26 on each side of the body. Their location bears great resemblance to acupoints or trigger points. Medial and lateral points may also be used. SELS are located on numerous vital energy circulation flows (similar to meridians) which move through the body in a system as organized as that which is known to exist for the nervous system, lymphatic system, circulatory system, etc. Deficiencies, over-stimulation, blockages and stagnation can develop in these circulation flows in response to various factors including lifestyle

stresses, attitudes, intergenerational effects (genetics), environmental influences, illness and traumatic events.

It's certain science doesn't portend to understand the beneficial mechanism at work with Jin Shin Jyutsu. Conceptually, the hands of the practitioner touching the body of the receiver are envisioned as "jumper cables" in stimulating and awakening the movement of vital energy along the circulation flows. Selecting among dozens of procedures or "flows," the practitioner applies those which she consciously determines or intuits as most helpful. The effectiveness of a session is enhanced by the practitioner's ability to bring an unencumbered healing intention to each session, as well as following the established procedures. Personally, when giving a treatment I become meditative, while still maintaining a keen concentration on being present in a healing place of mind.

Medical patients who seek out Jin Shin Jyutsu typically report feeling profoundly relaxed immediately after a session, with amelioration of the underlying complaint over successive sessions. One can readily envision that many disorders, diseases and injuries could be helped by a dynamic reduction of physiological and emotional responses to stress, together with a dynamic boost in vitality or energy. Indeed, extensive clinical reports, as well as a handful of well-designed studies, suggest that a broad range of persistent complaints respond to Jin Shin Jyutsu as well as to touch therapy modalities.

In the course of my work with physicians, psychologists and other health care practitioners, I have been referred cases for such diverse disorders as chronic and acute pain, nausea, fatigue syndromes, anxiety, depression, immune deficiencies, asthma, high blood pressure, organ transplants, eating disorders, headaches, gastrointestinal disorders, hormone imbalances, recurrent urinary infections, insomnia, and adverse reactions to medicines, such as chemotherapy and radiation. It is not uncommon for people to try Jin Shin Jyutsu only after other conventional therapies and more popularized alternative modalities have failed, or have a limited benefit.

Heart Transplant Patients Benefit

A trial program at California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco, in which I have participated for two years, provides Jin Shin Jyutsu services to heart transplant patients. Few hospitalized patients have a more difficult wait than those awaiting a heart transplant. Donor organs are not readily available and the wait for a heart with an acceptable match can take many months. Meanwhile, the patient, whose heart is so diseased that a transplant is the only viable option for continued life, is at risk for numerous medical complications and physical discomforts, as well as psychological setbacks.

While the sample size was small, heart transplant patients reported experiencing extensive benefits from the sessions (offered once or twice weekly throughout their hospital stay). Comments included "helped

dramatically to reduce pain," "reduced anxiety and depression," "promoted a deep sense of relaxation," "aided bowel functioning," "helped reduce physical discomforts in the body," "helped improve mood," and "aided restful sleep at night."

A Transplant Success

One such patient, "Darlene," has given permission for her story to be told, in the hopes that it will help educate others about the possibilities for easing suffering, rallying the body's healing potential and enhancing personal growth with integration of this powerful touch therapy modality.

Responding to a request from the Coronary Care Unit of California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco, its affiliated Institute for Health and Healing asked me to provide services under a trial program to Darlene and several other transplant patients.

Darlene, age 59 at the time of hospital admission, had a history of heart disease caused by bacterial infection. She underwent an experimental open heart surgical procedure in 1996 which failed to resolve her symptoms. Unable to manage at home, she had been hospitalized for several months when I first met her. Like many, Darlene was an open-minded skeptic about whether Jin Shin Jyutsu could possibly help alleviate the many discomforts, depression and pain she was experiencing.

Over the next nine months, Darlene received on average two Jin Shin Jyutsu treatments per week. She practiced Jin Shin self-help daily. Her response was almost immediate. Among the many benefits Darlene reported following Jin Shin Jyutsu treatments were: reduced anxiety, dramatically reduced pain in feet (caused by longstanding neuropathy), increased ability to attain deep relaxation, improved bowel functioning, reduced physical discomforts in her body, improved mood, and ability to attain restful sleep at night.

If a painful or uncomfortable medical procedure was in progress or about to be performed at the time I arrived, Darlene found the Jin Shin Jyutsu sessions to be particularly helpful in reducing the pain and tension she felt right then and there. I made it my practice never to get in the way of the medical staff's work with Darlene, and more frequently, I found that the staff went out of their way to create an uninterrupted period of time for our sessions. Many times Darlene fell into a deep sleep during the bodywork.

On her birthday weekend, after 12 months awaiting a new heart, Darlene's doctor gave her the good news -- a heart was available. The nursing staff paged me at the patient's request. I came in to provide Jin Shin Jyutsu support, working alongside the medical staff to help prepare Darlene for transplant surgery.

Each preparatory procedure, some of them excruciatingly painful for Darlene in the past, was accomplished with ease and minimal discomfort. The nursing

staff reported, with surprise, that Darlene never needed sedatives. A lung pressure measure that was higher than desired for surgery resolved and stabilized more quickly than expected by the nursing staff in the final hours before the scheduled surgery. Darlene was astounded that she remained "cool as a cucumber," alert and joking all the way into the operating room, in marked contrast to her prior open-heart surgery experience.

Darlene underwent the transplant surgery and a second surgery within 12 hours to close up a bleeding vein. Despite this ordeal, she was extubated within 24 hours and began eating solid food within 36 hours. I gave her a short treatment in ICU before extubation, and again on a daily basis during her hospital stay. Her progress proceeded very well for several weeks. However, a hospital-acquired infection under the breast bone required a major surgery to clear out the abscess, remove a portion of the sternum, and construct a flap from the pectoralis muscle.

Despite no less than three extended surgeries within approximately four weeks, Darlene was released to go home after six weeks, with continued excellent biopsy results and in high spirits. As an added benefit, Darlene believes the Jin Shin Jyutsu aided her not only in many physical and psychological ways throughout her hospital stay and surgery recovery, but also in her spiritual growth and personal awareness.

Darlene's courage in facing the transplant operation and her desire to share her story is part of her personal growth, and should be an inspiration to others who seek to integrate ancient practices and modern medical assistance in their path toward improved health and happiness.

Suited to All

Intensive care patients, elderly, children, patients with pain and other weak or ill patients are often not candidates for alternative approaches involving invasive procedures or deep tissue work. With Jin Shin Jyutsu, gentle application of the hands over clothing and working from any position comfortable for the patient allows practitioners to extend potential benefits to a broader population base.

During a treatment session, the recipient typically lies down in a supine position (removing only shoes and wrist jewelry) on a massage table prepared with double sheeting. This allows for easy access under or on top of the body without requiring the patient to assist in any way. After an initial interview, the Jin Shin Jyutsu practitioner, with sufficient mastery in the art of "pulse listening" will place her hands on the wrists of the patient and "listen" to a complex sensation.

Pulse listening, an ancient technique associated with Tibetan physicians and today's acupuncturists, involves placing hands on both wrists to sense the energetic pulse. Within this vibration, practitioners can sense 70 different qualities and textures in the pulse. This ancient Oriental practice is believed

to provide a view into the specific pattern of harmony or disharmony within the individual, which enables the practitioner to determine the most effective procedures to help promote balance. The energetic pulse may be "listened" to during the session and again at the end of the session to evaluate the shift in harmonization.

A single session lasts about 50 to 60 minutes for adults, and 15 to 20 minutes for children and fragile adults. After the practitioner selects the steps to apply to the identified circulation pathways in need for that session, she will place her hands on safety energy locks on the body which are intended to enhance a particular circulation flow's movement and vitality. These SELS (52 primary points, 26 on each side) are nearly identical to acupoints or triggerpoints in other disciplines. The practitioner's hands will move from point to point along the "flow" pattern, typically staying on any one SEL for a few minutes or more. For example, if applying the "Spleen Function Energy Flow," the hands will be placed on five different energy locks, sequentially. These SELS closely correspond to several of the points where acupuncture needles would be placed. The Jin Shin Jyutsu practitioner will move her hands (rather than needles) to the next SEL when she senses that harmonization of the underlying vital energy (as perceived through her fingertips) has been initiated. Three to seven complete procedures can usually be accomplished within a single session, each tailored to patient's needs.

Borrowing From All

The body of knowledge that comprises Jin Shin Jyutsu is comprehensive in its application and in its origin. It takes from ancient Oriental healing traditions, as well as Hindi, Tibetan, Mediterranean and Native American traditions. As part of its understanding of healing systems, Jin Shin Jyutsu incorporates not only the concepts of a "universal life source," "12 organ flows" and the "five element theory," but also healing aspects of colors, musical notes, seasons, aromas, numerology and other metaphysical sciences.

A textbook, curriculum-based certification program exists for students worldwide, including continuing education credits for nurses and other health care providers. The training institute, Jin Shin Jyutsu, Inc., founded by renowned practitioner and teacher, Mary Burmeister and based in Scottsdale, Ariz., offers classes throughout the United States, Europe and South America on a regular basis. Burmeister has studied this art for more than 50 years, including an extensive apprenticeship with Japanese scholar Jiro Murai. Terms such as "master" or "grand master" are not used in Jin Shin Jyutsu. Humility and respectful performance of the work characterize the thousands of health care providers and others who have integrated this remarkable physio-philosophy into their lifestyles and professional practices.

The assemblage of knowledge that underlies Jin Shin Jyutsu is fascinating. Having been diagnosed with a terminal illness, Murai, a scholar and son of a prominent family of medical doctors, went to the family's country cabin to

die. There he meditated, fasted and practiced the ancient finger "mudras" (finger positions) from Hindi tradition, and to his great surprise, was cured within a short time.

This experience led Murai to devote his life to the study of the foundational healing principles as recorded in ancient and secret documents (to which he had special access through the Emperor Of Japan), such as the Kojiki (Ancient Record of Things), as well as biblical, Hindi, Tibetan and Oriental writings, among others. Over many years he conducted clinical trials and trained a handful of apprentices, including Burmeister.

Self-Help

I came to experience Jin Shin Jyutsu treatments in 1985 as an open-minded skeptic. Badly injured with broken ribs and pulled back muscles, I was also pregnant and unable to take conventional pain killers or muscle relaxants. With two toddlers at home and racked with pain, I was willing to try anything. My background at that time included a degree in psychology and a doctorate in law. I had worked throughout the 1970s, and into the '80s at a multidisciplinary clinic specializing in biofeedback, stress-management and other mind/body modalities considered pioneering at the time. While I readily understood the notion of a mind/body connection, the idea of interfacing or affecting our vital energy and healing capacity using touch seemed implausible, if not out-and-out quackery.

Despite my skepticism, after my third Jin Sin Jyutsu treatment I noted with surprise that I couldn't recall any pain since the first session. Chalking it up to coincidence, I missed a session or two, only to have the pain recur. Returning to twice-weekly sessions for another three weeks, I found the pain resolved and healing had rapidly progressed. Subsequently, I sent friends and colleagues with various disorders to the practitioner, who became my mentor and encouraged me to study the art. I initially trained with Burmeister, and saw this modality as a wonderful way to help friends and family in need. Time and again I was stunned by the reports of marked progress. Only rarely did a recipient of Jin Shin Jyutsu report no change.

Self-help is an important component of Jin Shin Jyutsu. Clients are taught simple self-help exercises to do in bed, at the office or while waiting in traffic, to relieve stress and to "jumper cable" their own energetic body to promote health and happiness. Our energetic body appears to benefit from a holistic approach to health. Combining the best modern medicine has to offer with the best in ancient traditions provides patients with diverse and comprehensive approaches to their health care. Finding ever more effective ways of collaborating and integrating these beneficial, traditional approaches with conventional medicine will assist each of us in reaching our potential for health and happiness.

Pennie Sempell is a private practitioner of integrative therapies, working in a multi-disciplinary group comprised of physicians, surgeons and

psychotherapists at California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) in San Francisco. Additionally, she performs in-hospital care and is involved as the therapist in rigorous scientific investigation of Jin Shin Jyutsu with breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, in conjunction with the Complementary Medicine Research Institute at CPMC. A certified practitioner of Jin Shin Jyutsu and additionally certified in massage and hypnotherapy, Sempell has more than 20 years of experience in various mind/body modalities, with a primary focus on Jin Shin Jyutsu. Information about patient care and research support may be directed to Sempell at 415/731-3611 or by e-mail to Penniegram@aol.com. For information about Jin Shin Jyutsu courses, seminars and certified practitioners in your area, call Jin Shin Jyutsu, Inc. at 480/998-9331 or visit

Suggested Reading

An excellent guidebook on the time-honored healing art of Jin Shin Jyutsu is *The Touch Of Healing*, by Alice Burmeister, 1997 (Bantam Books).