

**Nursing care in the use of non-conventional medicine: acupuncture***Atención de enfermería en el uso de la medicina no convencional: acupuntura**Assistência de enfermagem no uso da medicina não-convencional: acupuntura***Ana Marina da Silva  
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**Abstract**

Acupuncture is part of traditional Chinese medicine and was discovered many years ago in Chinese society, it visualizes the body through the "qi" energy and through everything that moves the universe, the five elements of nature. There are several scientific studies to try to prove its effectiveness. This study aims to understand the role of professional nurses in the use of ancient Chinese medicine: acupuncture, through studies of scientific articles carried out between 2012 and 2017. In this way, it was possible to identify in the results that the trained acupuncturist nurse already showed interest before even starting the postgraduate course and that, with such practice, it is possible to develop the profession with autonomy.

**Descriptors:** Acupuncture; Chinese Ancient Medicine; Nurse Acupuncturist.**Resumén**

La acupuntura es parte de la medicina tradicional china y fue descubierta hace muchos años en la sociedad china, visualiza el cuerpo a través de la energía "qi" y a través de todo lo que mueve el universo, los cinco elementos de la naturaleza. Existen varios estudios científicos para intentar probar su eficacia. Este estudio tiene como objetivo comprender el papel de las enfermeras profesionales en el uso de la medicina china antigua: la acupuntura, a través de estudios de artículos científicos realizados entre 2012 y 2017. De esta manera, se pudo identificar en los resultados que la enfermera acupunturista capacitada ya mostró interés incluso antes de iniciar el posgrado y que, con tal práctica, es posible desarrollar la profesión con autonomía.

**Descriptores:** Acupuntura; Medicina Milenaria China; Enfermero Acupunturista.**Resumo**

A acupuntura faz parte da medicina tradicional chinês e foi descoberta há muitos anos em meio a sociedade chinesa, ela visualiza o corpo através da energia "qi" e por tudo que move o universo, os cinco elementos da natureza. Há diversos estudos científicos para tentar comprovar sua eficácia. Este estudo tem por objetivo compreender o papel do profissional enfermeiro no uso da medicina milenar chinesa: a acupuntura, através de estudos de artigos científicos realizados entre 2012 e 2017. Desta forma foi possível identificar nos resultados que o enfermeiro acupunturista formado, já demonstrava interesse antes mesmo de iniciar o curso de pós-graduação e que, com tal prática, é possível desenvolver com autonomia o exercício da profissão.

**Descritores:** Acupuntura; Medicina Milenar Chinesa; Enfermeiro Acupunturista.

participation, which are essential for a good care-client relationship.

It is important to understand the following question: What is the role of the nursing professional in the use of acupuncture?

The general objective of this work is to understand the role of nurses in the use of acupuncture. The main specific objectives are knowing the history of acupuncture, understanding the technique used and its rationale, and clarifying the role of nurses in such practice.

### Methodology

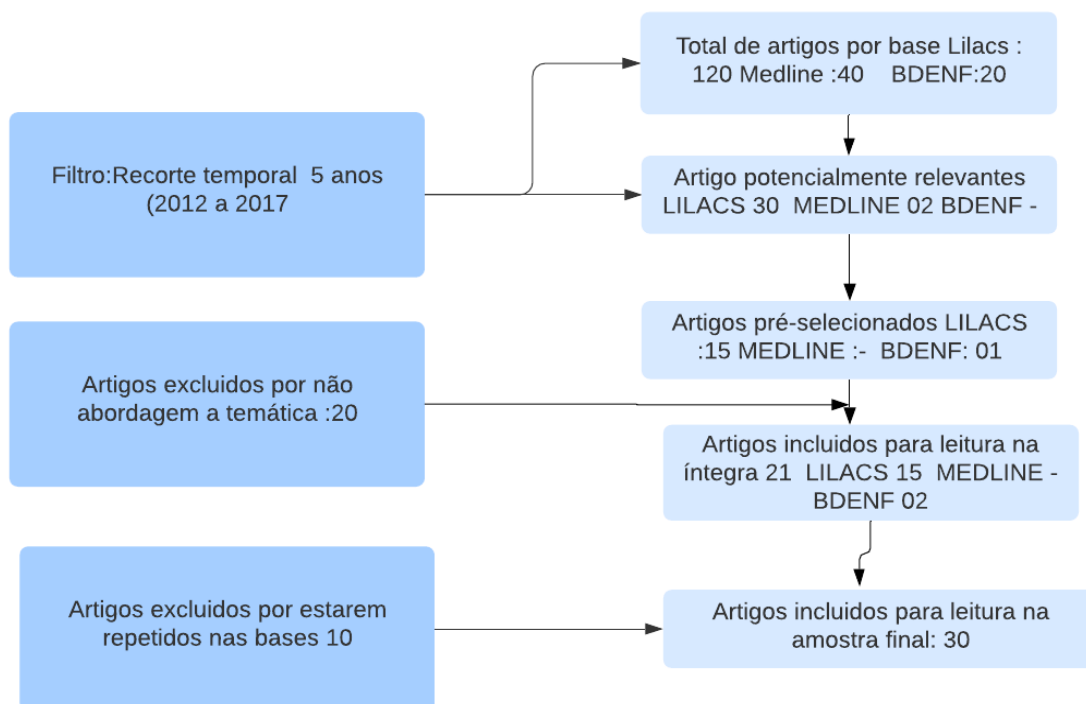
This research, carried out between March and October 2017, was presented through studies of scientific articles and websites of the Ministry of Health. It is qualitative research through an integrative literature review. Texts from the year 2012 to 2017 were used, and some texts from previous years were also used to present the history, which presents technical-scientific validation according to regulations provided by the Federal Council of Nursing and the State Council of Nursing. The search took place in the Virtual Health Library (VHL) databases: Database on Nursing (BDENF), Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences (LILACS), Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE). For the exclusion criteria: texts, articles, and regulations with years prior to 2003 and that do not comply with the regulations set forth by COFEN. The keywords were used: Acupuncture; Complementary medicine; Nursing and acupuncture; Chinese ancient medicine; acupuncturist nurse.

### Introduction

With the high cost of private care and together with the high value of medicines, the entire world has been looking for complementary techniques and practices that have been developing every day. Such development allows for greater possibilities of providing health care in a safer and more viable way, even if non-conventional medicine is still being gradually inserted in the Unified Health System (SUS). The National Policy on Integrative and Complementary Practices in the SUS (PNPIC), of May 4, 2006, combines quality, effectiveness, and safety with different practices. With each passing day, the population comes to know and accept practices that were previously restricted to classes, such as acupuncture restricted to the Orientals. Knowledge about the techniques of this modality is important so that it is suitable for everyone, also considering that acupuncture is a way to stay healthy<sup>1</sup>.

The biggest justification for understanding non-conventional medicine and the practice of acupuncture lies in the number of people, professionals, and patients, who are interested and question themselves about its use, in general and specifically for each need. We realize this when we look at the growing number of related searches. It is evident that conventional medicine is faster and faster and that the harm it brings is not noticed, where a medicine made for a cure can lead to death, expensive and unnecessary treatments and surgeries are done, in some cases, in an inhumane way, and that leads to a great devaluation of one's health. Furthermore, the practice of acupuncture has professional autonomy and user

Flowchart 1. Selection of articles included in the study. São Paulo, SP, Brazil, 2017



Results and Discussion

Chart 1. Main selected studies and their characteristics. São Paulo, SP, Brazil, 2017

Author	Title	Year	Journal	Objective
Rogério Gavassa Ornela et al	Acupuntura no tratamento da obesidade	2016	Revista do Instituto de Ciências da Saúde	Analyze the effect of stimulation of acupuncture points in the treatment of obesity
Leonice F S Kurebayashi, Taka Oguiso e Genival F Freitas	Acupuntura na Enfermagem brasileira: dimensões Ético-legal	2009	Acta Paulista de Enfermagem	Contribute to the reflection on the professional practice of acupuncture by nurses, contemplating the ethical-legal dimensions of the exercise of this activity
Viviane Peixoto dos Santos Pennafort et al	Práticas integrativas e o empoderamento da enfermagem	2012	Revista Mineira de Enfermagem	To analyze the possibility of nursing empowerment to the proposal of insertion of integralizing practices in the act of caring in nursing
Sabrina Pereira Rocha et al	A trajetória da introdução e regulamentação da acupuntura no Brasil: memórias de desafios e lutas	2015	Revista Ciência e Saúde Coletiva	Explore, from the life reports of acupuncturists, the struggle for regulation of the practice of acupuncture in Brazil
Estela Rita De Lima Bandeira Loureiro	Avaliação da acupuntura sobre o sistema imunitário	2014	Faculdade de Coimbra	Assess and identify the effects of acupuncture on the immune system

Acupuncture is part of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), had its origins in China so it is known for being historically millenary, proven through archaeological finds. With evidence of its existence in the Stone Age, between 8000 and 3000 BC (BC), there were needles made of stones, divided into 3 types, used to treat various pathologies. A little later, between 1500 and 1000 BC, during the Shang Dynasty, there were reports of the practice using needles made from turtle bones and carcasses<sup>2,3</sup>.

The technique of acupuncture was revealed by a mythological character known as The Nei Jing, in which the first information was recorded in a collection of manuscripts - The Treaty of the Yellow Emperor, around the 18th century BC. In the period of 770 BC and 220 after Christ (AD) the evolution of needles, which began to be produced in metal, that is, silver, gold, bronze, and other mixtures. From this moment on, the technique was accepted for therapies at the time<sup>4</sup>.

China had the medical scientific knowledge of the practice removed from all over the world and this resulted in the removal of the subject related to teaching the technique from the curriculum. However, in 1949, facing the precarious state of health care, the President of the Republic of China at the time, Mao Tsetung, made it possible to publish an acupuncture manual, then called Barefoot Doctor's Manual, in which it facilitated the use of the technique<sup>5</sup>.

The Canadian physician William Ostler considered "Father of Modern Medicine" included for the first time in a medical book the treatment with acupuncture for low back pain and sciatica in the book "The Principles and Practice of Medicine", in 1892.

In Brazil, acupuncture was brought by Chinese when they came to work in tea plantations, and the arrival

of Japanese immigrants also helped to spread the practice in the country. However, there are records that Brazilian Indians already practiced something similar even before the arrival of Pedro Alvares Cabral<sup>6,7</sup>.

The history of acupuncture in the country begins even before the discovery of the Portuguese in 1500, when Indians implanted similar techniques through the insertion of thorns in the body. MTC actually entered Brazil with the arrival of Chinese who were destined to work in tea plantations under government control in 1812, in Brazil the practice of Acupuncture was introduced in the table of the Outpatient Information System - SIA/SUS in 1999, through Ordinance No. 1230/GM2, and its practice that gained strength with Ordinance No. 971, published by the Ministry of Health in 2006, which approved the National Policy on Integrative and Complementary Practices in the Unified Health System (SUS). This document defines that in the SUS, approaches and resources that seek to stimulate natural mechanisms for the prevention of illnesses and health recovery be integrated, above all, highlighting the welcoming listening, in the development of the therapeutic bond and in the integration of the human being with the environment and with society<sup>8,9</sup>.

The needles used in acupuncture are smaller when used for blood collection, vaccines, etc. They are used made of a variety of materials, which can be silver or even gold. The gauge (diameter) of the needles is comparable to a strand of hair. So, there is no reason to fear needles. Acupuncture's form of action has been related to neurohumoral stimuli for the release of some substances such as norepinephrine, endorphins, enkephalins, serotonin and the release or inhibition of some others that act on pain. The mechanisms of vasoconstriction or vasodilation that



trigger the growth of the number of leukocyte cells would also be affected<sup>10</sup>.

The reality of meridians may seem to be linked to loose connective tissue, which would be the conductor of stimuli given by needling and by the distal effects achieved with acupuncture. Some studies show that the acupoints are positioned in thicker places in this tissue. But most of the time, research assesses the effectiveness or not of acupuncture, in which the results proved to the World Health Organization its effectiveness. The main theoretical basis, according to Chinese philosophy, deduces about the existence of some elements such as: Qi (which is read chi): the vital energy that shapes and regulates the spirit, mind, and physical<sup>11</sup>.

The meridians: which are like channels or pathways connecting 12 organs (known as Lung, Heart, Pericardium, Stomach, Spleen, Liver, Gall Bladder, Kidney, Small Intestine, Large Intestine, Bladder and Triple Burner). The 5-element theory: in which wood, fire, earth, metal, and water are considered to have a correlation, they are basic elements of the material world. And the theory of Yin and Yang: that they are opposite forces and necessary for the existence of life. Acupuncture treatment aims to correct an imbalance or altered body function, tonifying or reducing the flow of Qi, through the insertion of needles and/or the use of moxibustion at the acupuncture points. The classic TCM literature says that there are 1000 acupuncture points, of which 361 are together in 14 groups located in regions that contain several nerve endings, blood vessels and muscle bundles, distributed along the meridians<sup>12</sup>.

By inserting a needle into an acupoint, physiological actions are stimulated on three levels: energetic, humoral, and neural. When inserting the needles, the nociceptive receptors that release neurotransmitters such as bradykinin, histamine, substance P and prostaglandins are stimulated. These are stimuli taken to the central nervous system by A-delta fibers and C fibers that are in the skin and muscles, in three ways: hypothalamic route, where there is release of  $\beta$ -endorphins, cortisol, serotonin; midbrain pathway, with activation of interneurons that trigger serotonin and norepinephrine; spinal level, with dimorphic releases, enkephalins (dopamines that block the synthesis of the nociceptive substance P). These substances will affirm, above all, the analgesic and anti-inflammatory effects, articulating the patients' algic, inflammatory and immunological responses<sup>13</sup>.

The Three Pillars Theories of: The essential flow Qi, which makes everything exist. The Yin and Yang the cyclic transformation of the force of opposites that makes everything move. The Five Movements, which are: Water, Wood, Fire, Earth, and Metal. What is Qi or Chi (energy). The vital emanation, which gives life to everything that exists. Qi is the invisible life support. For TCM, Qi links spirit to matter. It ascends, descends, moves in all directions. Light Qi (yang) floats like air. Heavy Qi (yin) descends to form matter. Everyone possesses the Ancestral Qi which is the force transmitted by the parents during conception and the Acquired Qi which is originated from the energy of the environment which is assimilated through breathing and feeding<sup>14</sup>.

Chart 2. Associations of the five elements. São Paulo, SP, Brazil, 2017

	Madeira	Fogo	Terra	Metal	Água
Estações	Primavera	Verão	Nenhum a *	Outono	Inverno
Sabores	Ácido	Amargo	Doce	Picante	Salgado
Transformações	Germinação	Crescimento	Transformação	Colheita	Estocar
Cores	Verde	Vermelho	Amarelo	Branco	Preto
Sabores	Azedo	Amargo	Doce	Picante	Salgado
Estados	Vento	Calor	Umidade	Secura	Frio
Sistemas Yin (Zang)	Fígado (Gan)	Coração (Xin)	Baço (Pi)	Pulmão (Fei)	Rim (Shen)
Sistemas Yang (Fu)	Vesícula Biliar (Dan)	Intestino Delgado (Xiaochang)	Estômago (Wei)	Intestino Grosso (Dachang)	Bexiga (Panguang)
Órgãos dos Sentidos	Olhos	Língua	Boca	Nariz	Ouvidos
Tecidos	Tendões	Vasos	Músculos	Pele	Ossos
Emoções	Fúria	Alegria	Preocupação	Tristeza	Medo
Direções	Leste	Sul	Centro	Oeste	Norte
Notas Musicais	jue2 角 (mi)	zhi3 徵 (sol)	gong1 宮 (dó)	shang1 商 (ré)	yu3 羽 (lá)

Fonte: MTC Balance - Terapias Holísticas.

Even though acupoints are located well externally and superficially, they can affect our body's internal functions. Thanks to every connection, it is understood that an energy imbalance in an organ can manifest itself in different areas of the body. Knowing in depth the paths of each meridian, their connections and particularities, it will

be the professional's role to observe and study the place that is manifesting changes and relate which or which meridians pass in that area. And then, choose a selection of points along these channels to make the Qi modulate and structure so that in the end the organism returns to its equilibrium<sup>15</sup>.



In Vietnam, the first decrees on this type of practice were issued in 1955, which regulated the activity of 25,000 doctors specializing in traditional medicine and 20,000 acupuncturists<sup>15-17</sup>.

For professional performance for the class of nurses, specifically, it is mandatory to take a Complementary Health Therapy (TCS) course, which includes acupuncture, in accordance with the terms of specific regulatory legislation. This legislation also establishes complementary therapies (CT) as specialties or professional qualifications in nursing, after a specialization course with a full 360-hour workload, the nurse has an essential role due to the direct and intrinsic contact with patients in hospital environments, in health centers and in communities, with the possibility of educating, clarifying, and guiding the population regarding the use of these alternatives in a scientific and systematic way. Holistic nursing has been adapted, also in the field of science as a paradigm of human thinking, and its work has progressed directly in relation to the application of complementary therapies, mainly due to the benefits that can be brought to humanity, stimulating to develop more research on this topic<sup>18-20</sup>.

It is essential to broaden the horizons of the concepts of the benefits of the acupuncture technique, with expansion of therapeutic practice for nurses in universities and health institutions, public and private, so that it becomes a multidisciplinary, shared, ethical practice, for the benefit of Brazilian population<sup>20-22</sup>.

It is noticed that acupuncture as an Alternative or Complementary Therapy practice is increasingly developed in the Unified Health System, allowing freedom to work with new concepts and with a holistic view, with low cost and almost zero or zero side effects. Acupuncture is a field of holistic care that is thriving for the professional nurse, streamlining during a humanized and comprehensive

performance. It is up to nurses to dispel conceptual and marginalized myths about acupuncture, seeking technical-scientific knowledge, new resources and tools so that there is the possibility of assisting the individual in the prevention and promotion of their health<sup>23-25</sup>.

In Brazil, to exercise the profession regularly, the professional nurse needs to have a Taxpayer Registry after completing the postgraduate course, in accordance with the legislation in force in the state of São Paulo; In hospitals, due to the lack of professionals trained in acupuncture, the professional usually performs other functions, but which can be complemented with acupuncture in nursing consultations, it is recommended that the acupuncturist nurse seeks an alternative registered service so that he can also have the benefits of CLT (Consolidation of Labor Laws), ensuring the benefits that will be reaped in the future<sup>26-28</sup>.

### Conclusion

This research is relevant for the academic community because it emphasizes the acupuncture nurse acting with autonomy, acupuncture came as an alternative and complementary measure to add the user's health, leaving aside the techniques of traditional Western medicine loaded with technologies and, mainly, highly evolved medicines which have major side effects. Research related to this topic is still on the rise. The acupoints are placed in strategic locations to generate a balance of energies to maintain good health, within the scope of acupuncturist nurses, it was noted that there is a growing need for their work in hospitals and health services, since the practice gives the professional autonomy to work in her own office. The acupuncturist nurse has the role of guiding the population about the use of this technique, dispelling the myths and fears about the use of needles.

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