

Clara Cohen: Okay, so today's a little bit different, and honestly, I'm a little bit nervous. If you've been around AcuPro Academy for a while, you'd know I've been creating content for over 12 years: YouTube videos, this podcast, social media post, my weekly newsletter, and in all that time, I've never touched anything controversial.

Because first of all, I like to stay positive, and I just wanna be educative and helpful, beneficial, and not start a fight, right? Because I'm someone who really does not love confrontation. My husband is okay with confrontation. I am not. It actually makes me anxious, like genuinely anxious.

I could lose sleep over it. So creating content that is controversial is definitely scary for me, so please be kind. But why am I doing this today? Because I think growth requires a little discomfort. I'm all about self-growth. And because these three topics, they are conversations our profession is already having, probably in Facebook groups, in clinic hallways, in DMs, and I would rather we have them out loud with compassion and curiosity than keep whispering about them or fighting about them.

So today, I'm gonna talk about three subjects that get a lot of people in the TCM world fired up and often fighting as well. One, dry needling versus acupuncture. Boy, that's a big one. Two, is practicing TCM as a non-Chinese person cultural appropriation? And three, is AI going to take our jobs?

And I want to say up front, there is no judgment on which side of the debate you are on.

My goal is not to tell you what to think. My goal is just to get us talking and understanding each other. All right, let's take a deep breath. Let's do this.

Welcome to AcuPro, a show dedicated to making Chinese medicine and acupuncture easy to grasp and fun to learn. Hi, I'm your host, Clara Cohen. I support practitioners and students like you in changing the world one patient at a time. My goal is to share my passion for TCM and empower you to achieve superior patient care.

I love to showcase the amazing benefits of acupuncture, because after all, acupuncture rocks

So before we start talking about dry needling versus acupuncture, I wanted to share a couple of patients' story that can illustrate what we're talking about today.

A few years ago, a patient came to see me for tennis elbow. She was a competitive cross-country skier and often did 120 kilometers races, so this is really long race, right? And when you do repetitive movement, of course, joints can be affected, ligaments can be affected.

So her left elbow was a classic lateral epicondylitis. And when she came to see me, she mentioned that her physiotherapist did dry needling on her. She said it did not help. It was very painful. And so a friend recommended she tries acupuncture.

What's interesting is when the physiotherapist will learn trigger point release, a lot of time at the elbow they will learn large intestine 11, and large intestine 11 is a fantastic point when there's elbow pain.

However, its main function, as you know, is to clear heat. My patient was blood deficient. She basically practiced in the cold, because that's what she did cross-country, and raced in the cold, so there was a lot of cold invasion, and she's blood deficient, which doesn't help because she was also a vegan. So when looking at her constitution and pulse and tongue and doing the full consultation, I realized she is blood deficient, and she has invasion of pathogen cold specifically at the elbow, creating blood stasis.

So when using large intestine 11, for example, as a dry needling point, it clears heat, which means it would make things worse, not better. What we need to do is moxa. Because we treat the entire person, we would nourish blood with stomach 36, spleen 6, liver 8.

We would move blood for the blood stasis with large intestine 4, liver 3. And when we look at Ashi point or points around the elbow that are really painful, we cannot do he-sea point. He-sea points are points that are all clearing heat at the elbow. So we can't do large intestine 11, however, we can do large intestine 10, which is right on the extensor muscle and is often painful.

We can do all points that are Ashi points, but not points that clear heat. Does that make sense? And of course, we can add a gallbladder 34 to help joints, ligament, tendons, and add a moxa to clear and break the cold that's creating the stagnation in order for her to heal. Now, she was a vegan, I cannot change that, so we can give her lots of nourishing food for blood, like beets, raspberries, . And cooked vegetables and beans to help the body heal using food as medicine.

This is what I'm talking about with the difference between dry needling and what we do as acupuncturists.

So let's look at it from the perspective of what is dry needling. It's basically using acupuncture needles and inserting them in trigger point in the muscles to release tension and reduce pain.

Why do they use the term dry needling? Because first of all, they cannot use the word acupuncture because that is dedicated to acupuncturists,

Where does it come from? Western myofascial pain theory, particularly the work of Dr. Janet Travell from the 1940s. . And interestingly, most classical acupuncture points map almost exactly onto those trigger point.

For example, gallbladder 21 is a trigger point, right? So this is not a coincidence.

Here's where a lot of TCM practitioners get frustrated, I think, and honestly, I totally get it. We train for three to four years minimum, depending on where we go to school, right?

We study an entire medical system. We study pathology, physiology, anatomy, plus all the TCM subjects. Dry needling practitioners in many places complete a weekend course, sometimes 50 to 60 to 80 to 100 hours, depending on the country. This is significantly different than our training as acupuncturists, right?

So it's really important to think of the patient's safety, and also because they are just focusing on musculoskeletal, they are missing the whole picture of the entire patient, that's the difference there, too.

People that are in favor of dry needling are gonna say that dry needling is science-based. It is really using the musculoskeletal system, while acupuncture is not.

It's looking at meridian and qi. That is not true. We do look at meridian, we do look at qi, but we also look at the musculoskeletal system, right? You agree with me.

But here's what I keep coming back to. Dry needling treats muscle and fascia. We treat muscle and fascia, but we also treat the entire human being.

Chinese medicine is deeply sophisticated. That is something not a weekend course can replicate. So in my opinion, instead of spending our energy fighting, let's spend it showcasing what makes us extraordinary.

Did you know I created three books to support your TCM journey? Often I'm asked, "Clara, what's the difference between all three?" Well, they all have fun, colorful visual to make them much more easy to grasp and understand each concept. They're definitely not your TCM typical boring, dry books. They are available in hard copy, and they ship all over the world.

But if you'd rather the digital version, they all come with video links to complement them and can be downloaded on any device. My first book, Acupoint Made Easy, this is the orange one, covers all acupuncture points function, location, depth and angle of insertion, including special points categories, extra point cupping moxa, and all my clinical pearls.

My second book, Chinese Medicine Made Easy, which is my green book, covers all TCM foundation, diagnosis, yes, including tongue and pulse, with lots of colorful visual to help you grasp specifically observation, right? Case studies and my digital fillable intake form for you to use with your patients. My third book, Chinese Medicine Treatments Made Easy, that's my purple book, covers all TCM treatments for 160 syndromes, including acupuncture points, herbal formulas, diet, ear acupuncture, and many other TCM tools.

So you can have that book at your fingertips every day in clinic. It is a must for all practitioners. I provide sample for each of my books that you can download to see if this is really truly what you were looking for, because I want you to be happy with what you're investing in when you invest in any of my products.

You can check out the links to all my books in the show notes below, or go to my website, acuproacademy.com, and on the Menu tab, click the Shop tab and get your copy today.

Let me share with you another story about this. I have a patient that came to see me after a car accident he had four years prior. He had been getting dry needling, chiropractic treatment, massage therapy, physiotherapy, and when I saw him, he had so much pain still, he could not sleep.

He was extremely anxious, stressed, he has lost his job, he wasn't working anymore. His nervous system was completely overwhelmed. So guess what I did? I did not touch his neck, his back, like everyone else was doing. I actually put him face up, and I focused entirely on calming his nervous system.

I brought him into a parasympathetic state, I used points to calm the mind, to calm the anxiety, and to relax him. And by the end of the treatment, he was crying, literally bawling, saying, "This is the first time in four years I can relax."

This is amazing. Can we do this every time?" Because I told him, "I'm not gonna touch your pain because everyone else is.

So I'm just gonna try to relax your body because your nervous system is so dysregulated." He loved it, and it helped his healing process and what everybody else was doing because I was able to calm his central nervous system

No dry needling protocol in the world was going to do what I was able to do for his central nervous system.

Our results speak for themselves.

When a patient comes in and say, "I tried dry needling, it didn't work," explain to them that we treat the entire body and nothing is separated, and that physiotherapists or people that do dry needling have great knowledge of musculoskeletal system, but not anything else.

Now, let's go to topic number two. Is practicing TCM as a non-Chinese person cultural appropriation? Someone left a comment on one of my Instagram post, I had never thought of, oh, what am I doing here? Am I taking, Chinese medicine and appropriating it to myself?

So it's really personal for me because I'm literally the person this question is about, right? I was born in France. I moved to Canada. I learned English, and then I learned Chinese medicine. I have built an entire career and business around a medicine that did not come from my culture.

So believe me, I have thought about this a lot. I love Chinese medicine.

And here's something I want to share. In Vancouver, I have been many time to this French bakery who is run by a Chinese family. They make croissant. They make baguette. Beautiful, flaky, buttery croissants. Am I offended by this? Absolutely not. They went and learned the craft of French baking. They do it, and they love it, And the food is delicious.

Now, is that the same as TCM? Not exactly, but it made me think about what the real question is. What does cultural appropriation actually mean? Well, it is when elements of a minority culture are adopted by members of a dominant culture without understanding, without credit, and in a way that is harmful and exploitative.

. Well, that is not us TCM practitioners who are not Chinese descent.

I think that those who feel non-Chinese practitioners practicing TCM is appropriation will say TCM is inseparable from Chinese history, philosophy.

You cannot take the medicine without the culture.

Those who feel non-Chinese practitioners absolutely can and should practice TCM will say, well, medicine has always traveled across cultures.

Chinese medicine itself absorbs influences from India, Ayurvedic medicine, and Tibet. The great Chinese medicine scholars invited the world in. They translated their text. They taught internationally. That was intentional.

Restricting TCM to only Chinese practitioners could only actually harm the medicine by limiting its reach.

What matters is how you practice. Are you honoring the system? Are you studying it deeply? Are you giving credit where credit is due?

So here's where I stand. I learned Chinese medicine, and all my teachers were from China. And right now I'm learning Italian, and I have to tell you, as a Gen X person, navigating a completely new language and a way of thinking at this stage of life is not easy. It is very humbling. It requires patience and a lot of mistakes.

But that is exactly what deep learning requires. You do not just pick up the vocabulary. You have to understand the culture, the history, the way of seeing the world. The question is not where are you from, the question is how you show up.

Do you study? Do you acknowledge that this medicine's come from China, from thousands of years of observation and wisdom? Do you credit Chinese scholars and Chinese history in your work? Like Sun Simiao came up with the ghost points. I love the ghost points.

Sun Simiao totally rocks. So for example, when I share my video on the ghost points, and if you haven't seen it yet, I'll have the link below for you, I credit Sun Simiao. So I don't think this is appropriation. I think that is devotion.

I love to practice with integrity, teach with honesty, and remember that we are a guest in a very wise and generous house, that is the TCM house.

Before we continue with today's episode, I wanna share something that honestly feels like a big moment for me. If you've been following me for a while, you know I've always said no to all sponsorships. I've been approached many times, but I turn them all down because if I don't genuinely use a product or love it, I will never recommend it to you.

But today is different. I am super excited to introduce my very first sponsor, drum roll, please, Jane App. I'm also a Jane ambassador, so this is a company I actually use and love. I am saying yes because I've used Jane for years in my own multidisciplinary clinic. Truly, it's the best practice management software and electronic medical record I've ever worked with.

Before Jane, we were using a clunky system that made everything harder than it needed to be. When we switched, the entire clinic felt the difference immediately. Jane is built by people who actually understand what it's like to be a practitioner running a busy practice. One of my favorite features is online booking.

There is nothing better than waking up and seeing patients booking their own appointment while I was asleep. Your patients can book when it works for them, and the wait list feature fills last-minute cancellations automatically. I love that. I used to spend so much time calling eight to 10 people just to fill up one spot.

Jane also automates the things we never enjoy doing, like intake forms, reminders, confirmation. It honestly feels like having an extra assistant handling all the moving parts so you can focus on what really matters, which is supporting your patients and being the TCM rockstar practitioner you truly are.

There are so many features I could talk about, but we would be here all day. If you're looking for a system that brings more ease, more clarity, and calm into your practice, I truly recommend Jane. You can check it out at jane.app/demo, and because you're part of the AcuPro community, you can use my code `AcuPro1MO`, one month, when you sign up to get a one-month grace period on your new account.

The link and the code are also in the show notes below for you. Now let's get back to today's episode.

Topic number three is an interesting one. It's very, very new, but is AI going to take our jobs? Okay, let me start by saying, and I know some of you will be shocked and unhappy, I know it's controversial, but I do use AI. When I create

my newsletter, I go to an AI website called NotebookLM. NotebookLM is great 'cause you can feed it any kind of information, So I feed it my YouTube video that I'm sharing in my newsletter, a case study that I'm sharing in my newsletter.

Anything that I provide in that newsletter, I will share it on NotebookLM, and I'll ask it to create an infographic to go into the newsletter. If I went to Canva and did this on my own, it would take me two to three hours to create this amazing infographic. NotebookLM will do it in 30 seconds to one minute.

So to me, that is very useful to illustrate what I'm sharing in the newsletter, for example. I do look at ChatGPT and ask it question. I have to say it is wrong half of the time when it comes to acupuncture. It does not know how to locate points, where they're located. It makes mistakes all the time on functions of points.

It makes things up. But if we wanna do research, for example, and I wanna do a research on San Si Miao for the ghost point, I can go to Perplexity, Perplexity is an AI that is really good for research, and ask it to research deeply San Si Miao and the history behind it.

And then I understand how this all came about deeply, and I can go and ask more question. So for studying, for understanding, I think that AI can be very, very useful.

Now AI is already used in healthcare for robotic surgery, for example. It can also analyze symptoms and suggest differential diagnosis in Western medicine. It can read lab results and imaging very fast and accurately. It can assist in clinical notes, research, and patient communications.

It can also help with scheduling, admin, and all the backend stuff that basically a lot of practitioners don't really enjoy doing, right? Makes sense.

And yes, there are AI tools out there being trained on TCM text that can probably output some point prescription based on symptoms. Are they good? Not yet. I've tested a few, and I have to say, so far it is not good at all.

What AI cannot do?

It cannot needle people. It cannot feel the pulse, observe the tongue. It cannot hold space for the patient who starts crying on your table. It cannot read the room, that moment where someone says, "I'm fine," but you look at them and you know they're not fine.

AI does not understand this at all. In TCM, we practitioners are part of the treatment. The practitioner-patient relationship is not a nice extra, it is our medicine.

The big picture here is every generation of practitioners has had a will this replace us moment. Pharmaceutical were supposed to replace us, then pain clinic, then dry needling, then Google. None of them did, because none of them could do what we do.

The more people crave a real human connection... I actually believe that the more technology takes, the more humanity will need authenticity.

We can walk into our treatment room and do the thing no algorithm or AI ever will: connect with our patients.

Here you go. These three controversial topics. I can't believe I did this. Please be kind. I have to say, actually, it felt good to actually talk about these out loud and get over my fear of confrontation. Even I was so nervous going in. I feel a bit better now.

I want to know what you think, truly. All three of these topics smart people disagree on, and I know you have an opinion too.

So go find me on Instagram, on Facebook at AcuPro Academy, and tell me which of these three gets you most fired up, and what is your take on it? And please be respectful. It's all about being nice and kind to each other.

If this episode resonated with you, please share it with a colleague or a classmate, because these are conversations our profession needs to have openly, and the most of us who have them with compassion and curiosity and kindness, the better.

Thank you so much for being here. I truly appreciate every single one of you. You can find all my resources at acuproacademy.com and connect with me on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook. I'm always here to listen, and no matter what, keep rocking it using TCM.

Thank you so much for spending your time with me today. I truly hope you benefited from this episode, and I would love for you to share it with a friend that may benefit from it as well. Follow the show, leave a review, and if you want more, go to my website, acuproacademy.com. I have tons of resources there with treatment protocols, case studies, free courses, and so much more.

And connect with me on all social media at AcuPro Academy. I'm on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, X, Pinterest, and LinkedIn, and TikTok . And no matter what, keep rocking it using TCM. Please listen to the disclaimer because The AcuPro Show podcast and material shared through AcuPro Academy, which is a subdivision of Natural Health Sense Incorporated, are designed solely for educational and entertainment purposes.

The utilization of information from this podcast or any associated material is at the user's discretion and risk. This content is not meant to replace the guidance of an acupuncturist, Chinese medicine doctor, medical doctor, physician, or any qualified professional, nor is it a substitute for proper diagnosis or treatment.

Users are strongly advised not to ignore or postpone seeking medical advice for any existing medical condition with their healthcare professional regarding any health concerns.