

# The Monthly Qi

## What's Happening at Southwest Acupuncture College

*The Monthly Qi* is a one-page Shout out devoted to the seasonal energy of the year.

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### Sa'am System of Acupuncture

by Adam Broder, DOM, Southwest Acupuncture Alum

Two years ago, I began learning and practicing a system of acupuncture called Sa'am and it has inspired me greatly and transformed the way I work. I learned of it on the podcast Qiological, an excellent resource for conversations with practitioners from all areas of our Chinese Medicine world. The system comes from Korea, and it uses the Korean four needle technique. The reader may recall that with this technique there is one channel chosen for treatment. Two of the needles are used to supplement the mother element while the other two are used to drain the grandmother element, resulting in strong tonification to the chosen channel. This simplicity and elegance is one of the things that caught my attention about Sa'am. For mostly every treatment the practitioner chooses just one of the 12 primary channels as the most deficient at that moment, and strongly tonifies it using just four needles.

The system may seem simple, but applying it comes with a learning curve. Caution must be used, as it can be quite effective when applied properly, however mistreatment can make things worse for the patient. We tend to be taught in school that acupuncture is gentle and the worst that can result from a treatment is for the patient's symptoms to not change at all. But if a method has the power to harm it also has great power to heal. I've seen evidence of both, more so the latter certainly, in my time using the system. And I've also felt the benefits firsthand as I use it on myself regularly.

In its theoretical foundations, Sa'am arranges the 12 primary channels into six counterbalancing pairs. Figuring out which channel pair is most out of balance is one of the top diagnostic considerations when using the system. Of course, the patient's chief complaint is also an important factor and must be brought into the decision-making process as well. Where this system really shines, for me, is in the way it forces the practitioner to see the patient as fully and as deeply as possible. In determining the relative strength or weakness of a particular channel, the Sa'am system considers everything related to that channel to be clinically relevant: the channel trajectory itself, the archetypal body morphology represented by the channel, the channel's emotional qualities, its relative temperature, its role in overall physiology and in personal growth and evolution, among others. Nothing about a patient is skipped over or ignored, and thus the patient gets the sense that they are being truly seen. These channel qualities are presented as arising naturally from both the channel's Five Element correspondence and its Six Conformation correspondence. As an example, the Gallbladder is not just Wood, and it is not just Ministerial Fire, but a dynamic combination of the two. Wood and Fire together create a strong outward energy characterized by movement and aggression. A presentation with these qualities in excess could then be treated by supplementing the counterbalancing channel to GB which is Pericardium. This dynamic approach to treatment mirrors the complexity of human beings in general, another reason I've been so drawn to working with the Sa'am system.

For more information about the Sa'am system, here is a link that shows the notes for the episode of Qiological where Adam Broder, DOM, first learned about the system. It has a link to an article from the Journal of Chinese Medicine as well. <https://www.qiological.com/saam-acupuncture/>

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