Lower Back Pain/Sciatica:

Note: For lower back pain during pregnancy, please see *Fertility, Pregnancy and Childbirth: Low back pain (during pregnancy).*

Diagnostic for the practitioner:

Trouble at different disc levels can be identified by the resulting type of sciatica:

- **Tai Yang (UB) channel sciatica** is the most common type, and it connects to a bulging or herniated disc at L5-S1. This will be the case in 75% of the sciatica you will treat. Because it relates to the special relationship between the LU and UB channels, it is considered to be Lung-deficient-type sciatica.
- **Shao Yang (GB) channel sciatica** relates to L4-L5, is not uncommon, and is seen approximately 20% of the time, frequently in combination with UB channel sciatica.
- **Spleen/Stomach channel sciatica** is the least common type of sciatica, affecting the front of the thigh. You will see it 5% of the time, at most. This type of sciatica can be a little more challenging to treat.
- **If sciatica shows up on more than one channel**, this indicates multiple disc involvement. It is more common to see UB thigh pain with GB calf pain than GB channel thigh with UB calf pain.

Comments: Be sure to thoroughly cup the areas of UB36, UB54, GB29 and GB30 to clear toxins from the entire hip socket. When I am cupping a lower back/hip, I am always sure to cover UB36 (at the crease where the buttocks and hamstrings meet), as I consider dark cup color there to be "sciatica looking for a place to happen." If this area is painful, it could mean lung cancer, in which case UB13 Fei Shu will also be painful. Do not alarm patients, but if both areas are painful, ask them to get a chest X-ray.

Acute lumbar strain:

- **Bleed the veins found in the popliteal crease (UB39-UB40 area).** For acute conditions, this is the most effective treatment and immediately takes the pressure off the spine. I highly recommend this treatment.
- **1010.19-1010.20** Water Gold/Water Through, **11.12** Er Jiao Ming, bilaterally needled; **cup the lumbosacral area**.
- **1010.13** Horse Gold Water and **1010.19** Water Through, needled on the opposite side or bilaterally (Dr. Young, 2008).
- **22.07** Xia Bai and **001** Hand Golden Gate or **22.03** Shang Bai and **001** Hand Golden Gate, needled bilaterally or on the opposite side, this combination of points is used for middle back and waist pain.

Formulas:

- *Du Huo Ji Sheng Wan* is my personal favorite.
- *Tong Qi San* is effective for acute lumbar sprain (Dr. Young, 2008).
- *Tian Qi Du Zhong Wan.*
- *Qi Ye Lian Analgesic Pills.*
- Boswellia, turmeric, omega-3.

Comments: Er Jiao Ming has the Reaction Area of the Kidney. It tonifies the Kidney to treat Kidney-deficient conditions. Because the dorsum of the middle finger corresponds to the spine and DU Mai, Er Jiao Ming is remarkably effective in the treatment of spinal and lumbar pain. The points are especially useful in treating acute lumbar sprain or twisted lower back, when the patient cannot breathe, cannot stand straight and cannot move. In this case, I might additionally advise either cupping the lumbar muscles or bleeding UB40 Wei Zhong (any vein in the popliteal crease) for a quick and solid fix.

"Master Tung treated acute back sprain using either Er Jiao Ming or Horse Gold Water. Clinically the two points are not needled simultaneously and either of the two points is sufficient. Horse Gold Water has the Reaction Areas of both Kidney and Lung and is very effective for lower back pain and Urinary Bladder type sciatica. Water Gold/Water Through has the Reaction Area of the Kidney, making them very useful to treat chronic

low back pain. The combination of 1010.13 Horse Gold Water with 1010.19 Water Through is exceptional for both and is also useful to treat acute back sprain" (Dr. Young, 2008).

"A physician came to my office at 6:00 am one day. That morning, while putting on his shoes, his back went into spasm. I needled 1010.19-1010.20 Water Gold/Water Through and had him walk around, twisting his back, lifting his legs, and trying to mobilize his back as much as possible. After the treatment, he returned home and took a short nap. At 10:00 am that same morning he went to his office and saw patients all day as usual. This doctor reported to me that when this had happened to him before, if he took very strong medicine for such back spasms, he had to stay in bed for three days and then would have side effects of headache and stomachache. If he took a lower dose so as not to have these side effects, he would typically have to remain in bed for seven days. When using these points to treat twisted back or back spasm, it is best to treat on the day it happens" (Dr. Lee, 1992).

Lower back pain:

- Bleed **UB40** (any veins in the popliteal crease), **99.07** Ear Back* or **99.08** Ear Apex*.
- **1010.19-1010.20** Water Gold/Water Through, bilaterally needled.
- **SI3** Hou Xi, **22.04-22.05** Ling Gu/Da Bai needled on the opposite side (or bilateral for pain in the center), with same-side or bilateral **UB65** Shu Gu as a Guiding Point.
- **1010.25** State Water*; **55.04-55.05** Flower Bone Three/Flower Bone Four. Often, I combine these two when the worst of the pain is at the L5/S1 hinge, as they both direct the qi to this area.
- **33.08-33.09** Arm Five Gold/Arm Thousand Gold are very good for back pain and sciatica occurring in both the UB and GB channels.

- **22.06-22.07** Zhong Bai/Xia Bai*, bilaterally or unilaterally needled with **66.09** Water Curve (GB41) or **66.14** Water Phase* as a Guiding Point (treats midline lower back pain).

Chronic deficient pain due to Kidney weakness:

- **77.18-77.21** Three Emperors, **1010.19-1010.20** Water Gold/Water Through, both bilaterally needled, **22.06** Zhong Bai (Tung's SJ3) or **SI3** Hou Xi, unilaterally needled (one point on each side).

Especially good for cough with lower back pain:

- **1010.19-1010.20** Water Gold/Water Through, **22.04-22.05** Ling Gu/Da Bai, needled on the opposite side, **22.06** Zhong Bai (Tung's SJ3) or **SI3** Hou Xi, unilaterally needled (one point on each side).

Comments: The above protocols are listed in my order of preference, though of course you should choose the combination most appropriate for your patient. Never underestimate the power of bleeding the popliteal crease for the most immediate relief of back pain. When a patient has both UB and GB channel sciatica, you may choose to try 33.08-33.09 Arm Five Gold/Arm Thousand Gold (please see *Sciatica – Both UB and GB channels).*

The combination of Middle White (Tung's SJ3) and Water Curve (GB41) opens the Dai Mai (belt vessel) to address bilateral lower back pain, usually caused by Kidney deficiency. 1010.13 Horse Gold Water has a Reaction Area of the Kidney and Lung. 1010.14 Horse Fast Water has a Reaction Area of the Lung and Urinary Bladder. These points can be very useful to treat lower back pain and Urinary Bladder-type sciatica. 1010.19-1010.20 Water Gold/Water Through have a Reaction Area of the Kidney, making them very useful to treat chronic low back pain. The combination of Horse Gold Water with Water Through is exceptional for both and is also useful to treat acute back sprain.

"I usually combine Flower Bone Three and Flower Bone Four together to increase the strength and efficacy of the treatment. This is not so good for spinal pain but is effective for sciatica. There are many types of sciatica: Spleen/Liver channel, Stomach channel,

Gallbladder channel, and Bladder channel. This treatment is for the entire leg as well as numbness of the legs and feet. During treatment, typically the numbness gives way to tingling and then this tingling also goes away. If the patient complains about this, one should tell them that this is the normal procedure of recovery. While the patient is lying down and the needles are in place, have the patient raise their legs one at a time so that the stimulation passes down from their hips to their lower legs. If one does not move the legs thus, the effect is not as good. Otherwise, this is a very effective point combination with good results from only a few needles. It is also effective for leg and foot numbness" (Dr. Lee, 1992).

"To treat low back pain, bleed Ear Back or Ear Apex. The best time to bleed is between 1pm-5pm in the afternoon, because at that time qi and blood circulate in the Hand Tai Yang (SI) and Foot Tai Yang (UB) meridians" (Dr. Young, 2008).

"While visiting a clinic in China, a patient was presented to me who had lower back pain and had been treated repeatedly without much improvement. He was leaning against the wall as I inserted four needles into his chin (Water Gold/Water Through). The other doctors watched skeptically. Only a few minutes later, the patient let out a deep cough. In that moment, everyone simultaneously realized that the patient was radically improved. His pain was practically gone. Those of us who primarily use Master Tung's points are not surprised by this type of instantaneous result" (Dr. Lee, 1992).[1]

Lower back and groin pain:

- **SI3** Hou Xi or **A.04** San Cha Three, **22.04-22.05** Ling Gu/Da Bai, **33.12** Heart Gate (Tung's SI8)*, needled on the opposite side with same-side **LV3** Tai Chong, **66.09** Water Curve (GB41) or **UB65** Shu Gu as a Guiding Point (choose one).

[1] *Dr. Lee told me that when she began needling these points, the other doctors were openly laughing at her.*

- **SI3** Hou Xi, **22.04-22.05** Ling Gu/Da Bai, and/or **22.06-22.07** Zhong Bai/Xia Bai, **33.12** Heart Gate (Tung's SI8)*, all needled on the opposite side. Guiding Points are optional.

Cupping for groin pain with sciatica:

- If a patient is experiencing groin pain and sciatica, position them on their side, bending their top leg to thoroughly cup the affected side. Be sure to cup both **GB29** and **GB30** specifically. I also recommend cupping **UB36** while the patient is lying on their side, as the skin color after cupping here is often extremely dark (indicating toxin buildup) whether or not the patient has UB channel sciatica. I often refer to UB36 as "sciatica looking for a place to happen."

Comments: SI3 opens the DU Mai, so it can be used as a treating point for lower back issues. Heart Gate acting as SI8 is specific for the groin, but it does not cover the same function as SI3. One or both points may be utilized. If SI3 is used, it is best combined with UB65 as the same-side Guiding Point. However, if Heart Gate is used without SI3, then San Cha Three or Zhong Bai can be added as Treating Points, with GB41 as the Guiding Point to open the Dai Mai or LV3 as a Guiding Point for the groin.

Consider a simplified version of the above choices by needling opposite-side 33.12 Heart Gate (Tung's SI8), 22.05 Ling Gu, and A.04 San Cha Three with the appropriate Guiding Point(s) (Dr. Young, 2008). Dr. Young's treatment is especially useful for lower back pain that travels to the knee; A.06 Ci Bai also includes this specific indication (Renaud).