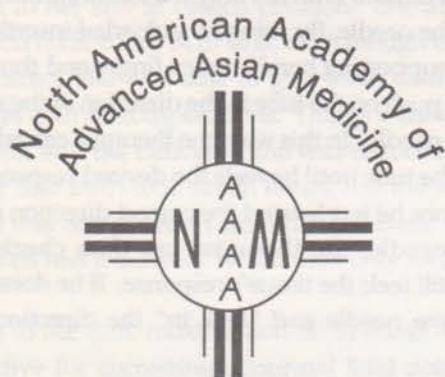


food) the procedure will provide too much stimulation even if done gently. If more stimulation is desired, a useful procedure is the tube tapping technique. Once the needle tip hits the core, the therapist can place the insertion tube over the needle and tap the top of the tube. In addition, the therapist may use the shinsen technique, or flicking the handle of the needle. Each time the therapist flicks the needle, however, it will dislodge itself a little. The therapist must therefore push the needle down slightly after each flick to ensure that the needle tip remains in contact with the core.

In summary, the insertion tube has many uses. The most important uses, I feel, are not those which my instructor taught me. Instead it is the tube's utility in targeting the core of stiff tissue and applying vibration to points on the body. Using the insertion tube, as mentioned, is just one of the many ways Japanese acupuncturists apply vibration to the body. I also feel that the tube is an important tool for Japanese acupuncturists in their day-to-day practice for refining their skill in using their fingers to locate the living acupuncture points and for determining when the desired response has been achieved.



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On SOTAI

Bunzo Takamatsu L.Ac.

I always strive for a type of treatment that is more universal (less technical), and more general. In other words, I'm attracted to a type of treatment which can be used by anyone. The simpler, the fewer tools needed and the cheaper, it is the better. A type of treatment which big hospitals would never consider using would be the best for me.

In this sense, Sotai is number one. Sotai therapy is effective for a variety of problems. As the teacher of Sotai, Dr. Kaizo Hashimoto, says in his book "Sotai is an amazing therapy that works for all the diseases." However I use it mainly for pain conditions, especially for back pain.

It is said that 70 to 80% of Americans have some kind of back problem. A close look at the types of cases I see support this claim. Many of my patients have back problems.

Conventional medicine offers basically three approaches: (1) anti-inflammatory drugs, muscle relaxants or cortisone shots; (2) physical therapy, and (3) surgery. If these do not give satisfactory results, then one may try acupuncture. As for the efficacy of the above conventional methods, (1) it just masks the symptom, (2) it takes too long to achieve results, and (3) it is most questionable. Some doctors claim that 80% of back surgery is unnecessary.

It is hard to make a general assessment of chiropractic because there are various ways to execute this technique, and there are some master chiropractors where techniques get results.

As for acupuncture, it works - or at least it does no harm. From my twelve years of experience, some people didn't get better, but no one got worse. When it comes to safety, I think that acupuncture is the best of the above methods. What is even safer however, is Sotai. And it is just as effective as acupuncture, if not more. Just like chiropractic, Sotai is based on the principle that the cause of disease is distortion of the body. The difference lies in how to correct that distortion. In chiropractic, the distortion is corrected by external force. The pressure and the direction of the ^{force} face decide the quality of the treatment. It is up to the practitioner's judgment to find the right direction and to give the right amount of pressure.

As for Sotai, the direction and the pressure of the force is controlled solely by a patient, which makes Sotai very safe. In other words, the gist of Sotai movement is that one moves in a comfortable direction, to a comfortable degree, and re-

laxes all at once. One can do it alone or with a partner, which makes it more effective.

Sotai not only corrects the distortion of the body but also releases localized tensions, which is the cause of pain according to Dr. John Sanno. (His book *Mind Over Back Pain* is worth reading. He believes that localized tensions are often caused by psychological stress. His treatments are focused on relieving psychological stress.)

I agree with the general rule that the cause of pain is localized tension. Many patients with back problems ask me what kind of exercise is good to strengthen the back, even though some of them look like Mr. Universe. I find it interesting because I see Americans are often obsessed with strength. I tell them, "what you need is not a way to strengthen the back which may cause more tension, but a way to release those tensions." When I do Sotai on them they understand what I mean immediately, because most people feel at least 50% better right away.

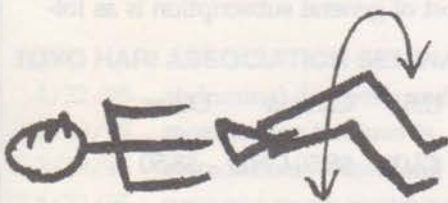
The principles of Sotai are very simple:

- (1) move toward the comfortable direction
- (2) move with a comfortable amount of force.
- (3) exhale while moving.
- (4) release tension instantly, all at once. (100% relaxation)

The most critical point in Sotai is releasing tension. After holding tension for a few seconds, one suddenly releases all the tension in the body. When this is done correctly one can feel the pain ease immediately. The basic principle of Sotai is very simple, but there are many variations of Sotai movements. I would like to introduce just two basic movements. With just these two movements, one should get 50% relief from most types of back pain:

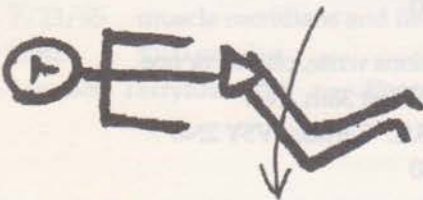
Exercise 1

- 1) Take a spine position. Both knees are raised. Slowly swing the knees laterally and check which direction (right or left) feels more comfortable. (A)



(A)

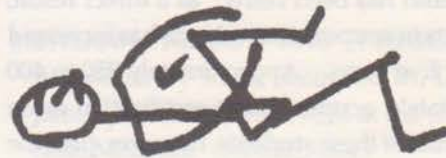
- 2) (Suppose left direction feels better.) While exhaling, swing both knees down slowly to the left. Take them down



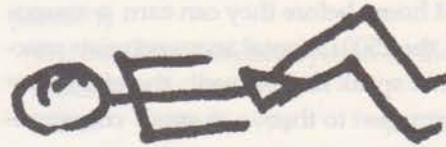
as far as possible within the comfortable range. Inhale and hold the tension there (B) for ten seconds. After that suddenly release all the tension in the body with exhalation. Take a deep breath. Repeat (2) two or three times. To get maximum effect, the therapist places the hands on the patient's knees and gives him gentle resistance when he moves his knees in (2).

Exercise 2

Take a spine position with both knees raised and hold the left knee with both hands. While exhaling, slowly and gently pull the knee to the chest, within a comfortable range. (A)



Inhale and keep the same position for a few seconds. Then suddenly let go of the knee



with exhalation. Take a deep breath. (B) Repeat this two or three times. Do the same on the left side as well. This Sotai movement doesn't require any assistance from a helper. (NOTE) If pulling the right knee to the chest is painful, start with the left. Avoid all painful or forceful movements.

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