

Acupuncture Your Diving Ailments Away

What is the connection between diving, medical problems and acupuncture needles? *Asian Diver* delves into the ancient art of acupuncture with Dutch physiotherapist and acupuncturist, Janneke Vermeulen, as she reveals the remarkable impact of acupuncture on diving maladies in her new book

By: **Janneke Vermeulen**

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and acupuncture originated in ancient China and has evolved over thousands of years. Although largely utilised in the West as a complementary health approach, athletes are increasingly turning to TCM for treatment, especially after telltale cupping marks revealed Olympic legend Michael Phelps' usage of cupping to relieve pain, inflammation, muscle tension and soreness from workouts. So what does acupuncture have to do with diving?

DIVING MEDICAL PROBLEMS

Not being able to clear the ears or having difficulty equalising is the most common problem experienced by divers and it's often caused by

a common cold, rhinosinusitis and allergic or non-allergic rhinitis. Having to stop a dive due to equalisation problems, when you're just getting under the water surface, can be very frustrating. Besides that, it can be painful, with risk of ear drum perforation, if you ignore the ear pressure. The fact that acupuncture can help to get rid of these ear, nose and throat (ENT) disorders and other diving medical issues is not well known to most divers around the globe.

ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture has a long history as a therapeutic treatment dating back to around 4,000 BC and the earliest acupuncture needles were

made of sharpened stone. One of the oldest medical books is the *Neijing Suwen* – compiled around 100 BC – which is written as a series of dialogues about internal diseases between the Yellow Emperor Huang Di and his physician. This book states that vital energy (qi) streams in our body through specific channels called meridians, which have connections with our organs (and each organ is connected to a specific emotion). Qi consists of a yin and yang component and these two opposites must be in balance with each other. If they are imbalanced, disease may occur. A Chinese medical diagnosis is based on an intake (medical history) combined with, among other things, pulse, tongue and facial diagnosis. This determines the selection of acupuncture points that need to be punctured and which food and/or lifestyle advice is required. Through the ages, the needles have gained a lot of subtlety and nowadays there are sterile and disposable acupuncture needles for single use, made of surgical stainless steel.

RIGHT: Janneke with her camera in Micronesia. Course "Diving Accidents" with the Scott Haldane Foundation, 2011

IMAGE: Dr. Simon Mitchell

4,000 BC

Chinese medicine and acupuncture invented

100 BC

Neijing Suwen – a series of dialogues about internal diseases between the Yellow Emperor Huang Di and his physicians – is written

208

Famed Chinese physician Hua Tuo is executed by warlord Cao Cao, who was his patient. His medical techniques recorded in his *Qing Nang Shu* (literally "green bag book") are lost

220

Shanghan Lun – Treatise on Cold Damage Disorders – a Chinese medical treatise is compiled by Zhang Zhongjing at the end of the Han dynasty. It is among the oldest complete clinical textbooks in the world and one of the four canonical works that TCM students must study

1985–1989

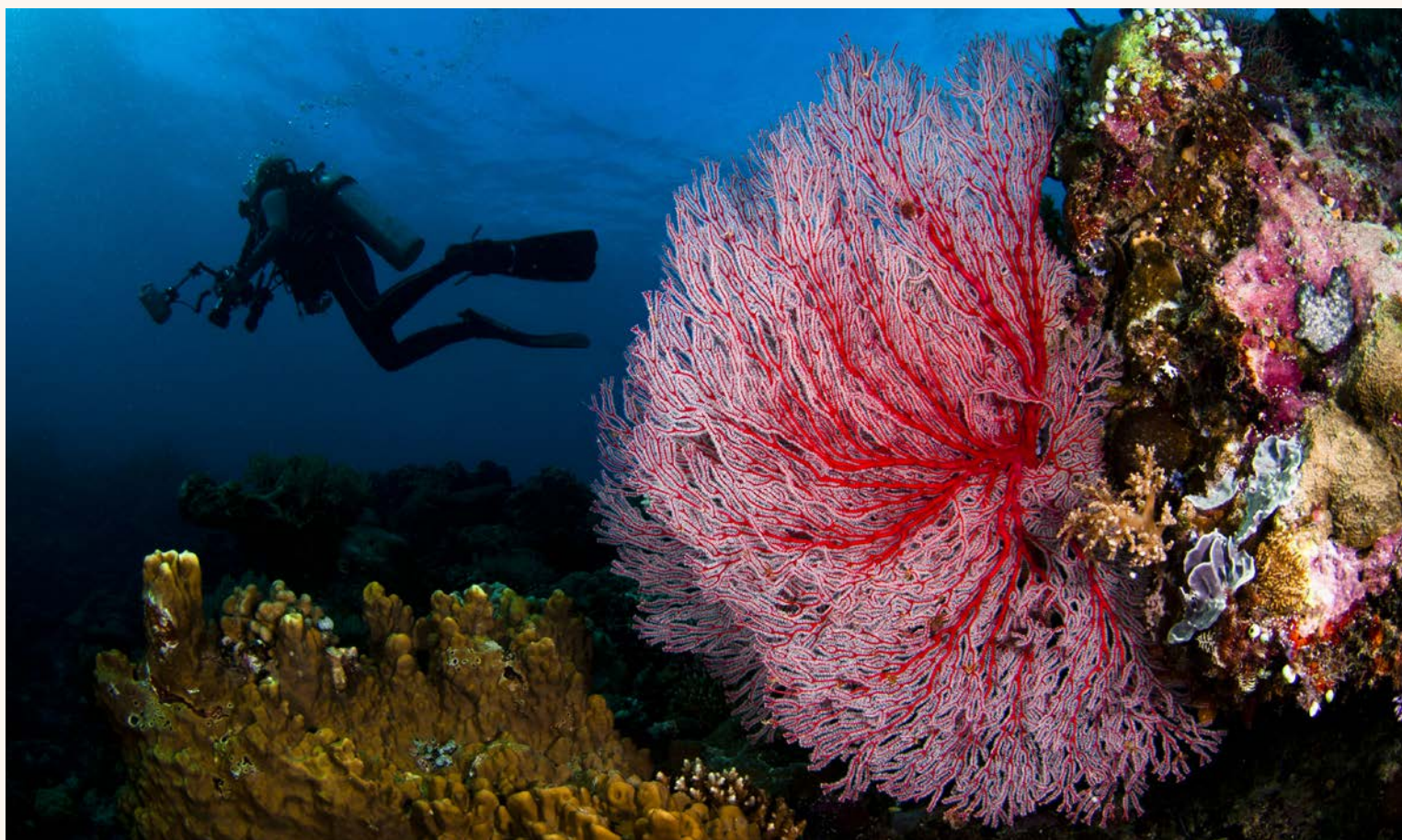
Janneke Vermeulen studies physiotherapy at Hogeschool Heerlen in the Netherlands

1991–1994

Janneke studies acupuncture in Antwerp, Belgium, at Jing Ming College (including one-month hospital internship in Nanchang, Jiangxi College for Traditional Chinese Medicine, with academic record, China)

1995–1997

Janneke studies Chinese herbal medicine in Utrecht, the Netherlands, at Bao Ku College

**256–282**

Zhenjiu jiyi jing, *AB Canon of Acupuncture and Moxibustion*, is compiled by Huanfu Mi, who assembled a consistent body of doctrines concerning acupuncture

280

Maijing Canon of the Pulse, a comprehensive handbook of diagnostics and therapy written by Wang Shuhe, is published

1578–1950

Bencao Gangmu Compendium of Materia Medica is written by Li Shizhen during the Ming dynasty. It is regarded as the most comprehensive medical book ever written in the history of TCM. In 1950, Mao Zedong makes a speech in support of TCM

1952

The president of the Chinese Medical Association in China announces that TCM will progress with a basis in modern natural sciences, absorbing the ancient and the new

2004–2015

Janneke does another hospital internship in Beijing, China. Janneke follows the master programme “Chinese face reading and diagnosis” in the USA at the Lotus Institute, Inc. from Lillian Pearl Bridges. She expands her Chinese medical knowledge by visiting many congresses and following courses internationally

2015

Janneke teaches TCM at postgraduate level in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, about “Acupuncture for Divers” (and a repeat day is scheduled for 2019)

2018

Janneke gives a presentation about “Acupuncture for ear pressure equalisation problems experienced by divers” at the 8th International Conference about Traditional Medicine and Acupuncture in Rome, Italy

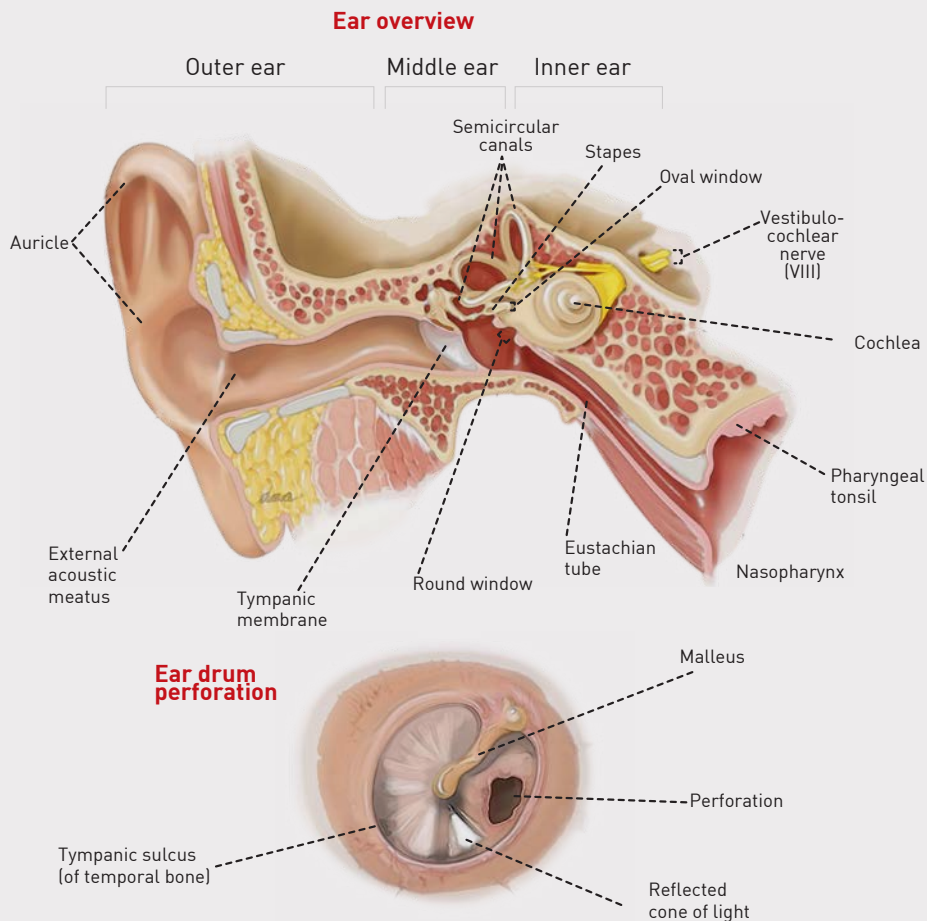
HEALING DIVERS WITH ACUPUNCTURE

THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIALISM

The idea of treating divers with diving medical problems first started in 2003 when one of Janneke's patients asked her to treat her middle ear equalisation problem that occurred every third day of her diving holidays. This problem resulted in her not being able to dive anymore and staying on deck the rest of the holiday. After several treatments and a diving week in Egypt, she came back to the practice happy, telling Janneke she didn't experience any ear problems at all and was able to dive every day! Inspired by all the magical underwater stories from another diving patient as well and having her own special memory of snorkelling once at Koh Samet in Thailand, Janneke decided to get her diving licence. With a leaflet, *Diving without problems with Acupuncture*, and an interview in the Dutch *Diving Magazine (Magazine Duiken)* in May 2004, the specialism "Diving Medical Acupuncture" was established. It has been a great challenge for Janneke to keep divers diving and making diving safer and more enjoyable!

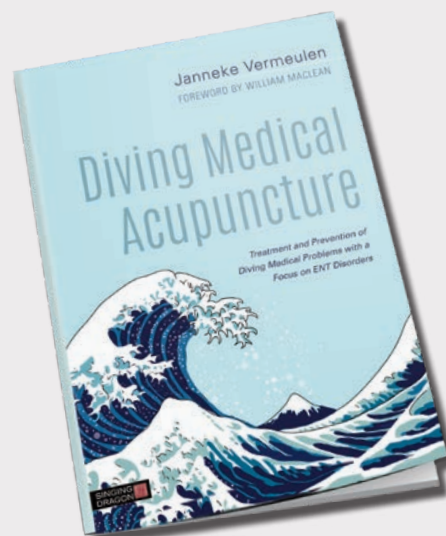
FROM PHYSIOTHERAPY TO ACUPUNCTURE

After finishing her physiotherapy training from 1985 to 1989 at Hogeschool Heerlen in the Netherlands, Janneke studied acupuncture from 1991 to 1994 in Antwerp, Belgium, at Jing Ming College, including a month of hospital internship at Nanchang, Jiangxi College for Traditional Chinese Medicine in China. She also studied Chinese herbal medicine locally in Utrecht at Bao Ku College. Janneke also had the exceptional opportunity to attend several ENT-related diving medicine courses with the Scott Haldane Foundation – an international institute dedicated to the education of physicians in diving and hyperbaric medicine worldwide. Besides her (para) medical background, Janneke has trained as a PADI Divemaster. To improve her knowledge of Chinese medicine, she has studied in Europe, China and the USA. She is a member of the Dutch Acupuncture Association (NVA) and the Royal Dutch Society of Physiotherapy (KNGF). Janneke also trains acupuncturists internationally in diving medical acupuncture.



BOOK

All of Janneke's diving related knowledge is collected and structured in her recently published book, *Diving Medical Acupuncture* (published by Singing Dragon in April 2018). Targeted at acupuncturists, non-acupuncture doctors and divers worldwide, *Diving Medical Acupuncture* describes the medical conditions that can prevent, complicate or result from diving and other water sports, and provides effective clinical treatments. It's an integration of Western diving medicine, diving techniques and Chinese medicine. Complete with anatomical diagrams and acupuncture point charts, the book is a practical resource for acupuncture clinicians who deal with the issues associated with diving. Advice for divers is given at the end of each chapter, and is available as a handout in downloadable form.



ABOVE: Janneke's latest book, *Diving Medical Acupuncture*

BENEFITS FOR THE DIVER

A physiotherapist, acupuncturist, Chinese herbalist and specialist in Western diving medicine in The Hague, the Netherlands, I treat divers from the whole country with a wide range of health issues at my practice. This includes chronic or recurring ENT disorders that affect pressure equalisation of the ears and sinuses, TMJ (your temporomandibular joint is a hinge that connects your jaw to the temporal bones of your skull) disorders, sea sickness, stress, tiredness, high blood pressure, migraine, lung disorders, addiction to smoking, obesity, neck and back disorders, muscle cramps, and more.

Divers with medical problems can benefit from the positive effects of acupuncture treatment. Acupuncture can transform phlegm and reduce its production, decrease swelling of the mucous membranes in the nose, sinuses, Eustachian tube and middle ear and address underlying energetic disturbances (such as

deficiency or stagnation of qi). When the Eustachian tube has a free air passage, divers will normally be able to equalise the middle ear pressure well (as long as the clearing techniques are performed correctly).

Acupuncture can increase your energy, reduce stress and improve immunity – thereby reducing the likelihood of a diver becoming ill. The diver will definitely feel better under and above the water surface! Lung function can be improved, whereby breathing will be easier, enabling the diver to stay underwater longer. For those with lower back problems, jumping into the ocean may be fine but climbing the stairs of the boat can be very painful.

Acupuncture can increase your energy, reduce stress and improve immunity – thereby reducing the likelihood of a diver becoming ill

Acupuncture can relieve pain, muscle tension and improve the mobility of the spine. Acupuncture can also help to lower certain risk factors of decompression illness (DCI), such as tiredness, being overweight, and decreased blood circulation. **AD**

JANNEKE VERMEULEN has been working as an acupuncturist since 1994 – partly trained in China and the USA – and specialises in diving medicine, Chinese facial diagnosis, cosmetic acupuncture and infertility. As a general physiotherapist, she also has in-depth knowledge in the field of joint and muscle complaints and stress related problems. In addition to practice, Janneke gives international lectures and certified courses on diving medical acupuncture. Janneke is the author of *Diving Medical Acupuncture* published by Singing Dragon (London, Philadelphia). For more information please visit her website www.mermaidmedicine.com. To order her book, visit www.singingdragon.com



ROGUE

The Aqua Lung Rogue comes standard with all the bells and whistles you want - without the fluff you don't. When it comes to your gear, every dive is personal, and with our patent pending ModLock connectors you can easily interchange between 27 size and accessory configurations.

Your Dive. Your Way. Go Rogue.



GripLoK
Saves fingers while quickly attaching tank



T-Lock
Easy shoulder sizing adjustment





SureLockII
Securely clicks weights into place



modLock
Connects interchangeable size and accessory configurations