Given the increasing utilization of acupuncture in clinical practice worldwide, substantial endeavors have been made to elucidate its mechanisms and evaluate its clinical effectiveness. Nevertheless, current evidence about acupuncture still faces various aspects of challenges which have been raised, not only from the field of conventional medicine and science, which criticizes acupuncture with rigor, but also from oriental medicine aiming to make acupuncture more valid and reliable. Those challenges call for the elucidation of both the characteristic features of acupuncture that are considered essential and building a sound evidence base which will enable reasonable medical pluralism regarding acupuncture. All of the authors of Acupuncture Research have had a leading career in the field of acupuncture, other healthcare areas and a wide range of relevant research methods, and have made substantial contributions to the contents of this book by using their expertise in both the clinical and research fields. This book contains a wide range of knowledge and experiences regarding acupuncture research.

After Chapter 1, which states the purpose of the book and gives briefly the contents of each chapter, Chapter 2 describes the history of acupuncture both in the western world and eastern world, the differences in the process of development and cultural-philosophical backgrounds between western and eastern medicine and the process of investigations of acupuncture research in the western world, along with the tensions resulting from the different theoretical underpinnings of acupuncture in western and eastern world. Then, Chapter 3 discusses the importance of focusing on the reasons and patterns of using acupuncture from the perspective of the patients themselves and the relevant methodologies to address those research questions. The safety of acupuncture is one of the most important issues in clinical practice, thus key methods, current levels of evidence and challenges to improve the safety of routine practice are addressed in Chapter 4. As most acupuncture practice involves an individualized treatment process according to the patient’s condition and needs, there is an increasing need in health research to identify the perspective of the patient regarding treatment processes and health outcomes after acupuncture in Chapter 5. The three chapters that follow show various methods of investigating the “effectiveness” of acupuncture. In chapter 6, a diverse range of exploratory research including case reports, a single-arm case-series, surveys and qualitative studies and their implications for acupuncture research are discussed. Then, in the next two chapters, Chapters 7 and 8, there is a discussion of different purposes, methods, values and the limitations of research comparing acupuncture with other active or sham interventions. In chapter 9, the complexities of the diagnostic and treatment processes of acupuncture, which originated from its diverse history and development, are administered, with concerns about how we walk...
a fine line pursuing both the richness of acupuncture as a complex intervention and scientific rigors that make acupuncture a more valid and reliable treatment. One challenge for the credibility of acupuncture is the obscurity of its mechanisms. In chapter 10, there is a discussion of the current evidence on biological correlates and physiological mechanisms and how research on the interactions between clinical practice and mechanisms can be done to improve the credibility of acupuncture. Given the highest position in the hierarchy of evidence levels, systematic reviews have been employed to synthesize and evaluate the increasing amount of results of acupuncture trials. Chapter 11 briefly addresses the methods, histories and clinical relevance of systematic reviews regarding acupuncture research. The roles of acupuncturists and oriental medicine doctors as clinical experts are becoming increasingly important during the whole process of planning, conducting and analyzing data about acupuncture clinical trials. In chapter 12, some practical guidelines are provided for oriental medicine doctors on how to successfully involve research and take a role and the authors encourage oriental medicine doctors to become actively involved in the research with their knowledge rather than remain as a passive audience. Lastly, as a respected leading senior researcher, Dr. George Lewith shares his valuable experiences and thoughtful insights on building future strategies for acupuncture research.

Through the aforementioned contents of this book, the authors suggest the concept of an “evidence mosaic” which involves a multidisciplinary approach towards the evidence of acupuncture, rather than an “evidence hierarchy” which is relatively focused on conventional perspectives of evidence. By guiding future research which will strengthen and enrich the evidence about acupuncture, this book will play a role as an important cornerstone in the future era of acupuncture.

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