

Acupuncture through the Seasons

by Michael D. Johnson, MA, MAOM, Lic.Ac.
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There's a pine tree in my yard which is so full of sap in the summer that it occasionally drips on my head. It's a fine specimen, and truly the envy other trees: as the year wears on, it never loses the "blush of youth", however bearded in hoarfrost.

Even so, one must concede that even the pine, with the shortening of the days, withdraws. Perhaps the sap is driven less to excess by the now curtailed passage of the sun. Or perhaps there is a sort of intelligence which, through custom or experience, guides the sap to the root in acknowledgment, however small, that winter is coming. Whatever the case, should one not but wonder that the noble pine, the ever-green, must bend to the changing of the seasons?

And this pine changes least of all. Its rushing sap of spring and summer, its quiet, but persistently verdant stance of autumn and winter, these are mere whispers when compared to the changes in the other trees. And their changes, however bold, are tiny when compared to those of animals and insects. Indeed, there is a seasonal behavior expressed across the canvas of Nature, which is shared, in greater or lesser part, by all.

While I admit to rejecting a simian attribution, I have no quarrel with Nature, and undergo the same seasonal changes as the rest. I feel my blood hot on the surface in summer; I feel the cold encroaching upon my bones in the winter, and embrace this as natural.

With acupuncturist's needle in hand, how could I ignore this truth? In summer, if the physiology surges at the surface, then what good is a needle to the bone? And in the winter, as the tissue pulls inward to resist the cold, why would I think to prick the skin? As the seasons change, so do the patients, and as the patients change, so must the acupuncture.

The world is turning all around us, and we turn with it, spiraling, spiraling, quietly forward, pressing ever-onward.