

Re: “Laser Acupuncture: A Concise Review” by Chon et al.
(*Med Acupunct.* 2019;31(3):164–168)

Fritz Hudnut, MTOM, DAOM, LAc

Dear Editor:

IT IS ENCOURAGING to see more data available on using laser in acupuncture therapies. A few people have tried over the years to incorporate laser into our practice in California, but so far it has not been successful. As Chon et al.’s article states, “LA is promoted as a safer pain-free alternative to traditional acupuncture, with minimal adverse effects and greater versatility. However, little is known about the mechanism of action of LA, laser characteristics, and effectiveness of LA therapy.”¹

However, several things seemed to be missing from the article, specifically the work of Dr. G. Litscher, who has churned out a huge number of publications on a range of laser applications, which can be found on PubMed. The one study that was cited doesn’t even scratch the surface of what he has made available for researchers interested in the topic. I have at least 41 of his articles in my primary citation manager database. Some of them are very short, but he specifies the different laser colors and what they do with regard to the Qi, as well as effects on the brain and heart-rate variability, including collaborations with researchers in China and in Austria. Based upon the sheer volume of work he has done researching laser as an “acupuncture” modality, there should have been more than just one citation of his work. I maintain a laser database from the early 2000s that now contains 131 acupuncture-related citations.

And somewhere between Dr. Weber, who manufactures the Weber Laserneedle machine, and Dr. Litscher’s guidelines, there is a distinction between defining “laser acupuncture,” which they call the stimulation of one point at a time with a laser pen-type device, and “Laserneedle,” which uses the multiple fiber-optic lines that is shown in the article’s photo to stimulate multiple points at a time. That approach is more in line with a typical “acupuncture” treatment. The Weber fiberoptic laser machine also offers a

choice of laser colors, depending on what depth of stim or type of condition is being treated.

It is good that the Quah-Smith citations were offered. She also seems to be researching laser fairly thoroughly. I cited one of her papers in a review that I did of electroacupuncture and laser treatments for depression in an acupuncture journal a couple of years ago, and we did e-mail back and forth on it a bit. She seems to be engaged in providing good data on using laser for “acupuncture-like” treatment, but the Dr. Litscher effort by comparison is huge in terms of investigating the relatively new and unknown field of laser as the “acu-point” treatment modality, rather than the traditional, now “old tech” metal needles, and he deserves more than being cited as just “one of the team,” rather than as the “lead investigator.”^{2–6}

AUTHOR DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No competing financial interests exist.

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Response to Hudnut re: “Laser Acupuncture: A Concise Review” (DOI: 10.1089/acu.2019.1393)

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FIRST AND FOREMOST, I would like to thank the authors for their letter to the editor and for the article “Laser acupuncture: A concise review.”^{1,2} I was invited by the editorial team of *Medical Acupuncture* to review the letter from Dr. Hudnut. When I read the text, I noticed that my name appears several times in it. I therefore felt that it would present a conflict of interest to review the letter myself, and that is why I refused. Nevertheless, I am grateful to have the opportunity to send in my own response to the letter, since the topic is very important and goes beyond personal aspects. I should also mention that I have only seen the first “unreviewed” version of Dr. Hudnut’s letter.

Since Austria is a very small country that many people associate with skiing or culture, for example the music of Mozart, it is not surprising that researchers conducting a concise review of acupuncture² do not immediately perceive that researchers in Austria have been undertaking research in the field of Traditional Chinese Medicine for many years and have been specializing in the field of high-tech acupuncture at the Medical University of Graz. This includes laser acupuncture research.³ It is true that we have written many scientific articles (more than 90 listed on SCI and/or PubMed) to date just on the topic of laser acupuncture. That is more than researchers from the United States and Germany put together.⁴ Detailed information can be found on PubMed, which is known to all researchers. Most of our work is also open access and freely available to the public.

What is much more important, however, is the fact that laser acupuncture is now established as a new research field and thus as an innovative method of acupuncture, contributing enormously to the well-being of our patients. The names of the countries and people doing the research work can be listed in databases for statistical reasons, but they are certainly of secondary importance. However, nevertheless, I

thank Dr. Hudnut for his comments concerning my small team in Austria. It is motivation for us to conduct further research on this interesting topic.

Thanks again to both lead authors, Dr. Chon and Dr. Hudnut—neither of whom I have yet gotten to know in person—for putting laser acupuncture in the spotlight of the medical acupuncture community.

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