



Although Acupuncture has a historical development that originated in China several centuries ago, it became only known in the West in the 16th century, and in Latin America even much later, in the first half of the 20th Century.

It was late in the twentieth century when, for the first time, Latin American doctors heard of and got in touch with acupuncture, mainly during trips to Europe. While some interested enthusiasts were able to travel to China to learn more about this millennial healing art, but trips were rare and expensive, and many doctors got in touch with acupuncture, on occasions or even by chance during trips to Europe while attending scientific congresses of their specialties in Western medicine, in the 40's or 60's, or in different circumstances with little time difference between the various Latin American countries.

The knowledge about Traditional Chinese Medicine, from a professional point of view, was preceded by some immigrant currents that brought with them, the rudimentary and non-professional knowledge of oriental medicines. Chinese workers arrived in Brazil in 1802, and with them some rudimentary knowledge of Chinese Medicine, including acupuncture. In 1908, Japanese immigrants arrived in Brazil (*Fig. 1*) and transmitted some partial and limited notions of Traditional Chinese Medicine, without superior training and in a rudimentary way how to treat some simple clinical

conditions. In many cases, without a livelihood by the cessation of the rural working contracts that originally brought them to this continent, they sought some form of occupation that would allow them, in the midst of the eastern communities, to survive without professional training and without legal authorization.

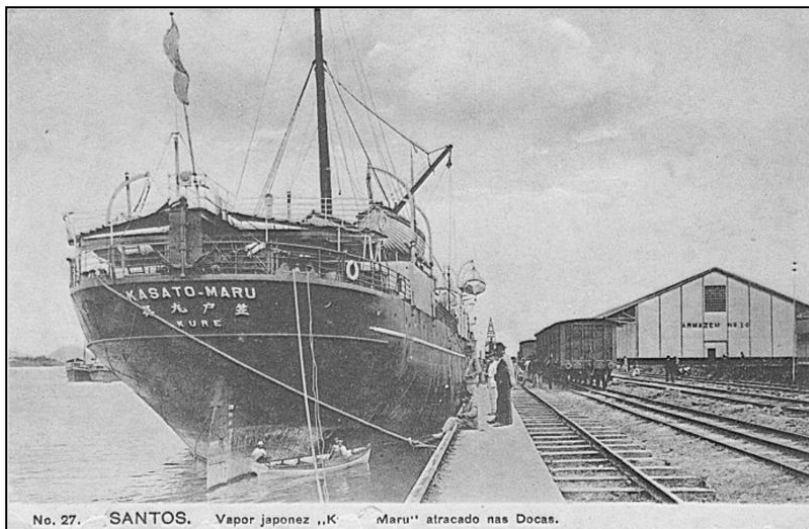


Fig. 1: The Kasato-Marú Ship docked in the Port of Santos, near Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1908, bringing the first Japanese immigrants, and with them, some basic acupuncture practitioners.

The beginnings of acupuncture practiced by qualified health professionals, began its development in most of the countries of Latin America, in the middle of the 20th century. Almost simultaneously, between the 40s and 60s, doctors and health practitioners get in touch with the benefits of acupuncture mainly from travel to Europe where it was already in more advanced stages of knowledge and disclosure.

For example, Dr. José Rebuelto stands out in Argentina and in 1948 he presents acupuncture in his country, becoming the pioneer in applying this discipline together with Drs. David Sussmann, Pablo Taubín, Jaime Szuster and Moisés Bicoff. The latter, on the return from Paris of Dr. Sussman where he had attended a course of Dr. Roger de la Fuye, founded in 1955 the Argentine Society of Acupuncture (S.A.A.), whose first President became Dr. Rebuelto himself; in 1964 they began to publish their "Argentine Magazine of Acupuncture", which continues to be printed even today.

In Uruguay, in the decades of the 60-70, the doctors Francisco Paternó (*Fig. Nr.2*), Andrés Hermida and Fermín Ferreira had received training in acupuncture in Europe, the latter one founding the Uruguayan Association of Acupuncture in 1973. In those years, there existed already free medical care with acupuncture by the Uruguayan Red Cross, where other doctors, interested in the discipline, had the opportunity to hear about, observe, and learn the bases of Traditional Chinese Acupuncture.

In Brazil, the physiatrist born in Luxembourg and established in Brazil Friedrich Spaeth (*Fig. Nr. 3*), having received the teachings of acupuncture in Germany, gave in 1958 the first courses of acupuncture for health practitioners, and some years later founded in 1972 the Brazilian Association of Acupuncture, open to doctors and non-doctors. In 1984 the Brazilian Medical Society of Acupuncture (SMBA) was created, renamed in 1994 as AMBA (Brazilian Medical Association of Acupuncture) and by 1998 the actual Brazilian Medical College of Acupuncture was founded.



Fig 2: Dr. Francisco Paternó teaching Acupuncture for free to Medical Doctors in the Red Cross in Montevideo, Uruguay, in the 70s.



Fig. 3: Dr. Friedrich Spaeth, born in Luxemburg, first Acupuncture teacher in Brazil, in the 50s.

In Mexico, in 1972, a first delegation of doctors travelled to China to study acupuncture, thanks to the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT). In 1980, academic activities in human acupuncture started in the National School of Medicine and Homeopathy (ENMH) of the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN), which recognizes in 1994 the specialty in Human Acupuncture.

In Colombia, in the 1960s, a few Colombian doctors started to practice acupuncture and moxibustion after studying in Europe, Argentina or some even as autodidacts. Dr. Germán Duque Mejía, after receiving acupuncture and neural therapy training in Germany, created the first teaching, practice and documentation center on these disciplines, together with Dr. Julio César Payán de la Roche. Dr. Gonzalo Parra, trained in Argentina, jointly with other colleagues created in 1972 the first Colombian Society of Acupuncture and Moxibustion, which, in its two years of existence, organized several intensive courses. In 1984 the Colombian Medical Society of Acupuncture and Moxibustion SOMCOLAM was created, followed in 2009 by the Colombian Society of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture SOCOLMEDA. Since 2007, the National University of Colombia awards a Master's Degree in Acupuncture to doctors.

In Peru, the Peruvian Association of Acupuncture and Moxibustion APAM was founded in 1972.

Interest in acupuncture has also developed in other countries such as Puerto Rico, Paraguay, Chile, Ecuador and Venezuela, where several Acupuncture Associations were active during several years, and are now trying to recommence their activities.

THE FOUNDATION OF FILASMA: LATIN AMERICAN MEDICAL ACUPUNCTURE SOCIETIES FEDERATE AND JOIN EFFORTS.

During the 1st Congress of the Brazilian Medical Society of Acupuncture SMBA in 1992, the Presidents of the Medical Societies of Acupuncture of Latin America assembled and jointly resolved to create the Latin American Federation of Medical Acupuncture Societies - FLASMA, with Dr. Max Sánchez Araújo from Venezuela as its first President.

A few years later, in 2000, in the city of Sao Paulo, Brazil, delegates from all Latin American countries meet again and decided to incorporate Spain and Portugal. The origin of the colonizing currents on this continent and with whom the Spanish and Portuguese languages are shared, thus creating the current Ibero-Latin American Federation of Medical Acupuncture Societies, FILASMA.

LEGAL STATUS OF ACUPUNCTURE IN LATIN AMERICA

Throughout the last 30 years, acupuncture has been progressively accepted by patients, as well as recognized by health, academic, scientific, teaching and policy authorities. Thus, in some countries earlier and in others later, the continuous increase in medical care by acupuncture has required the regulation of their practice creating a legal framework, different in each country.

In Brazil, in 1992, the Federal Council of Medicine recognized Acupuncture as a Medical Act. In 1995, the same Council recognized Acupuncture as a Medical Specialty.

In Uruguay, the Decree 32/001 of 2001 determines that Acupuncture can only be practiced by Medical Doctors, and the Uruguayan Acupuncture Association dictates courses since 2005.

In Argentina in 2001 the Resolution No. 997/2001 of the Ministry of Health establishes that Acupuncture is a Medical Act under the law 17132 of 1967 which regulates the practice of medicine and dentistry, but in 2008, another Resolution, 859/2008 the Ministry of Health of Argentina repeals by its article 3rd. the previous Resolution and enables kinesiologists and physiotherapists to practice Acupuncture.

In Mexico, in 2002 the Official Mexican Standard recognizes Acupuncture as a practice reserved for physicians.

Chile regulates in 2006 the practice of Acupuncture as an auxiliary profession of healthcare, which may be practiced by health personnel with higher training such as kinesiologists; in case of not being a doctor, the diagnosis must be derived to or supervised by a medical doctor.

BEYOND LATIN AMERICA

Latin American Acupuncture was from its very origins, intimately related to the rest of the world. As mentioned, the first acupuncturists of our countries received their training in Europe and the East. But such relationships extended further; since then, the Latin American Acupuncture doctors continuously attended congresses in Europe or Orient, and in turn invite experts from these countries to participate in the national and regional congresses that take place in this part of the world (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Members of the Uruguayan Acupuncture Association meet ICMART Board Members in Porto Alegre, during the Brazilian and FILASMA Congress, in 2012. From left to right: Dr. Alvaro Laens, Dr. Tomas Dawid, Dr. François Beyens, Dra. Silvia Rojo, Dra. Gabriela Diaz, Dra. Helena Pintos

By way of example, the participation of Dr. Nguyen Van Nghi, in March of 1978, in the 1st. World Acupuncture Symposium in Punta del Este, Uruguay, (*Fig. 5*) where he was its Honorary President, or the lectures of Dr. Raphael Nogier in Brazil and other countries of the region in the 80s.



Fig. 5: Dr. Nguyen Van Nghi, in March of 1978, in the 1st. World Acupuncture Symposium in Punta del Este, Uruguay.

While important personalities of the world acupuncture scene were always invited to give lectures at the Latin American Congresses, the first World Congress in Latin America organized by a European federation jointly with the local association, was the ICMART Congress of the year 2003, in Guarujá, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

In November 2010, during the VII International FILASMA Congress that took place in Seville, a mutual cooperation agreement was signed between FILASMA, represented by its then President Dr. Rafael Cobos, of Spain and Dr. François Beyens, at that time General Secretary of ICMART, called the World Agreement for Medical Acupuncture (*Fig. Nr. 6*). Since that time, in each International Congress of ICMART, FILASMA's members have participated and at each



International Congress of FILASMA, ICMART's executive representatives also attend.
Fig. Nr. 6: ICMART – FILASMA Agreement in Sevilla, 2010. From left to right: Dr. Silvio Harres, Dr. Rafael Cobos, Dr. Jorge Vas and Dr. François Beyens.

In June 2015, during the IX International FILASMA Congress that took place in Punta del Este, Uruguay, (Fig. 7) with the presence of the ICMART President Dr. Konstantina Theodoratou, and the decision was made to carry out in 2017, for the first time, a joint Congress between both organizations, ICMART and FILASMA.



Fig. Nr. 7: ICMART President Dr. Konstantina Theodoratou and ICMART Vicepresident Dr. Mike Cummings with the author during the International FILASMA Medical Acupuncture Congress in June 2015, in Punta del Este, Uruguay.

In 2016, an Latin American member, joined the ICMART Board for the first time. A Latin American Chapter has also been created in ICMART.

In 2017, following the agreement taken in Uruguay two years earlier, a joint Board Meeting of both organizations was held (Fig. 8) and the first World Congress organized together between ICMART and FILASMA (Fig. 9) took place in Mexico City; both Federations, decided to repeat this experience in the future every 4 years in a different Latin American country.



Fig. 8: Joint Board Meeting between ICMART and FILASMA during the Mexico ICMART-FILASMA World Congress 2017.

Fig. 9: ICMART-FILASMA World Medical Acupuncture Congress Opening Ceremony, Mexico, June 2017



At this time, four Latin American countries are proud to have their medical acupuncture societies as full members of ICMART: Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay.

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