CHAPTER X: INTRODUCTION

DR. ROSEN: Thank you, Dr. Straus, for that very undeserved and very kind welcome. It's a great pleasure and an honor to be here. I did have a chance to look through the website to see some of the previous distinguished lecturers, and I'm not quite sure how it is I found my own way onto this company. I see a number of very familiar and friendly faces in the audience and those of you who know me might be scratching your heads about the title of this talk the same way I've been as I've been preparing for it.

Of course, I'm by no means an expert in acupuncture, never have practiced it, and as a radiologist and physicist, really couldn't be considered a neurobiologist, either.

So to some extent, what I'll be doing today is sharing with you my own journey as I've been learning about acupuncture and learning about its biology through my interactions with some very talented and energetic colleagues that span probably, you know, 40 decades of -- four decades of experience.

Well, why am I here today to talk to you and what are we here to accomplish? We certainly know that acupuncture is increasing its utilization here in the United States and as was just introduced to us, has been in practice in other parts of the world literally for thousands of years. And yet, we still have a very incomplete understanding of the basic scientific foundation that supports the use of acupuncture.

So ultimately, of course, we'd really like to understand how acupuncture works. Well, that's nice, but it turns out at some level, of course, some will question whether acupuncture works or not and we'd, of course, ultimately like to have enough of an understanding of the underlying biology to both answer the how and maybe give us some insight as to the whether or perhaps more appropriately, the when it works.

It raises an interesting question as we begin to think about studying acupuncture. There are some, of course, that would say that it doesn't really make sense to study the mechanism of something before its efficacy is fully understood. Others might say that without an understanding of a potential mechanism, we really can't begin to design the studies to look at efficacy most appropriately. And I guess in the end of the day, we've decided to split the difference and try to answer both questions in an interactive way.