

Discovering Acupuncture

This twenty-five-hundred-year-old medical therapy is fast becoming the medicine of today

BY LAUREN FREIMAN, L.Ac.



THE IDEA OF SOMEONE poking small needles into the skin may be frightening to a few, but those who are in the acupuncture know-how already have found that chronic pain, allergies, hypertension, insomnia, hot flashes, menstrual cramps, to name just a few, can all be effectively treated with this medical therapy. Besides, the needles are so small that many who had any kind of initial fear soon find it was greatly unwarranted.

Acupuncture first made waves in the West when a *New York Times* reporter, James Reston, was visiting China with then-President Nixon in 1972. Reston, who had to have an emergency appendectomy on the trip, was given acupuncture for post-operative pain relief. He was so impressed by its results, he wrote about it upon returning to the United States.

Fast forward to 2012. Once heavily doubted by the medical community and used only by a select few, acupuncture has exploded in the United States, Europe and other Western countries. In the U.S. alone, acupuncture, a two-thousand-five-hundred-year-old medical therapy, has tripled in use within the past fifteen years.

Professional sports teams like the San Francisco Giants, New York Mets and Golden State Warriors keep an acupuncturist on staff. World renowned medical centers like the Mayo Clinic, Cedars Sinai Hospital, Duke University Medical Center, UCLA, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York and Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago are just a few institutions that now include acupuncture in their services.

Many of these even have full integrative medicine centers or departments, where acupuncture is used side-by-side with biomedicine. Reproductive endocrinologists encourage acupuncture for IVF patients because it increases chances of pregnancy by twenty percent, according to a study by the Ameri-

Health conditions effectively treated

Cardiovascular

Cardiac arrhythmias
Heart disease
High cholesterol
Hypertension

Digestive

Acid reflux/
heartburn
Candida

Colitis
Constipation
Crohn's disease
Diarrhea
Food allergies
Gall stones
Gas/bloating
Hemorrhoids
IBS
Liver disorders

Endocrinological

Adrenal fatigue
Autoimmune
disorders
Diabetes
Thyroid disorders

Emotional/ Stress-related

Anxiety

*For a full list of health conditions that acupuncture treats, visit malibuacupuncture.com

can Society of Reproductive Medicine. And acupuncture is now part of the military's medical care for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), pain and mild traumatic brain injury. The list goes on.

What is Acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a holistic system of medicine that views the body as an integrated system of structures and functions, where a dysfunction in one part affects other parts.

This idea may sound different than how many of us usually perceive health. If we go to the doctor complaining of heartburn, anxiety and insomnia, the doctor may prescribe three different medications, one for each issue. This might lead us to believe that our health conditions are isolated, and one has nothing to do with the other.

In acupuncture this is not so. Rather, acupuncture finds that all symptoms, whether big or small, acute or chronic, are connected. They are the result of an imbalance in the body.

How Does It Work?

In order to restore balance, acupuncture addresses the underlying root of the problem. For example, while taking an aspirin for a headache may provide instantaneous relief, acupuncture poses the question: "Why did you get a headache in the first place?" Maybe you have chronic neck and back tension that's been unaddressed. Or maybe you have not been sleeping well, not eating regular meals, have a food allergy or simply too much stress.

In addition to examining diet, lifestyle and other patterns of dysfunction, acupuncture works by engaging the body's own healing mechanisms. Through the insertion of the hair-thin needles, acupuncture affects the flow of qi (pronounced CHEE), energy, or life force through the body. Qi flows in a

network of fourteen energy channels called meridians that run throughout the body, resembling nerve or artery pathways.

There is an ancient expression, "Where the qi flows there is no pain." Health is found in the balanced, harmonious flow of qi, and disease ensues when there is imbalance or blockage in the flow. Through acupuncture, the imbalance in qi flow is corrected and optimal health is restored.

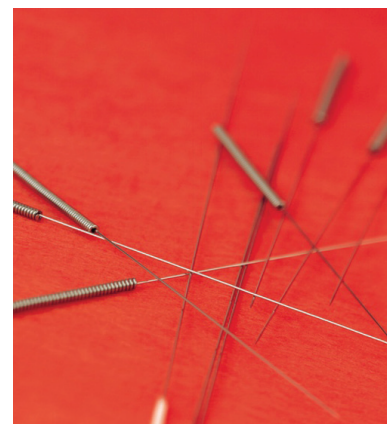
Though extremely complex and difficult to replicate, modern-day science has made some progress in understanding the mystery behind acupuncture. Neuro-imaging studies have shown that certain acupuncture points change blood flow to parts of the brain responsible for releasing endorphins, enkephalins, serotonin and cortisol. These neurotransmitters affect the central nervous system and can have a wide variety of effects including pain-reduction and stress relief.

Similarly, research has discovered that acupuncture stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), also known as the "rest and digest" nervous system. The PNS is responsible for actions that occur during rest like digestion, salivation, urination and sexual arousal. In chronic or high levels of stress, the PNS cannot properly "rest and digest" and these actions may be impaired.

Acupuncture also has been shown to increase the circulation of red blood cells, white cells, oxygen and co-enzymes. This may explain how acupuncture strengthens the immune system and reduces inflammation and pain.

Although science has scratched the surface in ascertaining how acupuncture works, there is still much left to be uncovered. As science is constantly evolving, it is likely that the future will bring more to light on inner workings of this profound medicine. ■

Acupuncture is a holistic system of medicine that views the body as an integrated system of structures and functions, where a dysfunction in one part affects other parts.



by acupuncture

Depression
Eating disorders
Insomnia
Substance/ smoking addiction

Neurological

Bell's palsy
Dizziness
Headaches

Migraines
Neuropathy
Parkinson's disease
Stroke recovery

Musculoskeletal

Arthritis
Disc problems
Fibromyalgia
Joint pain

Muscle cramping
Muscular tension
Osteoporosis
Sciatica
Tendonitis
TMJ
Traumatic injuries

Oncological

Side effects of

chemotherapy and radiation such as low blood counts, poor appetite, nausea and hair loss

Respiratory

Allergies
Asthma
Bronchitis

Common cold
COPD
Cough
Sinusitis

Skin-related

Acne
Cosmetic acupuncture
Eczema
Psoriasis

Rashes
Surgery recovery

Urogenital

Incontinence
Kidney disease
Kidney stones
Sexual dysfunction
Urinary difficulty
UTI

wWomen's Health

Endometriosis
Infertility
Menstrual disorders
Menopausal symptoms
PCOS
PMS
Pre-natal/post-partum care