

This Free E-Book is brought to you by Natural-Aging.com.

100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

Acupuncture and Pain Relief

By Brian B. Carter, MS, LAc

Acupuncture and Pain Relief by Brian B. Carter, MS, LAc

In my later years of medical school, I thought that pain treatment was below me. Even though acupuncture was best known for its effective pain relief, I thought that the Western medical world was simply behind as usual. We were amazed to learn all the other diseases we could treat with acupuncture, like neurological problems, immune system dysfunction, anxiety, and depression, and I thought, "Anyone can treat pain. I'd rather focus on something more interesting."

As I wrote about Chinese medicine on the Pulse website, I thought, "It would be more beneficial for acupuncture's image if I focused on something like psychology. And, people really need to understand the complexity and power of our herbal medicine system."

So talking about the treatment of pain wasn't really on my list.

Western vs. Eastern Pain Relief

But, I couldn't help seeing that Western medicine didn't have great pain relief solutions. They always have the side effects of some drugs, and the addictive potential of the opiates (their most powerful pain killers).

My wonderfully well-read wife subscribes to a journal called The Pain Practitioner (www.aapainmanage.org/literature/PainPrac.php). After reading that for a few months, I suddenly realized that they never mentioned acupuncture. That's crazy, I thought. After all, it competes with drugs in terms of effectiveness and doesn't cause side effects. Plus, it's superior in permanently removing neurogenic pain, and preventing temporary pain from going through the "grooved into the brain" process that leads to chronic pain syndromes.

When you think of acupuncture, the first thing that should come to mind is "Superior for treating pain."

Higher Standards for Pain Relief with Acupuncture

I've found that many acupuncturists do not enjoy treating pain. I think this may be because they haven't learned a style of acupuncture that treats pain effectively and quickly. In October 2002, I began a

Acupuncture and Pain Relief

mentorship with Robert Chu, who had learned a quick and powerful pain-relieving acupuncture system from a student of the famous Taiwanese acupuncturist, Master Tong.

Dr. Chu has taught me several acupuncture systems that are not currently taught in acupuncture schools. His goal is immediate pain relief, to some degree, and immediate relaxation or a sense of well being in other diseases.

This is a high standard – we can't always achieve total pain relief with one treatment. It may take ten treatments to make a permanent dent in some situations. But I like having big goals. I think I'm more likely to make progress that way.

Location and Cause of Pain

In the clinic, first we find out where your pain is. If you've been in an accident, or there are nerve-related issues, we do a physical examination to discover the nature of the problem. For example, your pain may be due to a problem in the spine, messages from the brain, one of your internal organs, or because you've bruised a muscle, tendon, or ligament.

Sometimes, we can't find an obvious cause, even with X-rays, MRI's, and lab tests. We have to assume then that the cause is neurogenic– from the brain, nervous system, or even the psyche. Pain can be a manifestation of emotion. There's nothing wrong, or less valid about that kind of pain.

Actually, Chinese medicine is well-suited to treat that. And people with pain of a psychological origin may find their Western physician less sympathetic, because they always have to look out for addicts. Acupuncture, conversely, can treat addiction.

These are not the only causes of pain. It is important to know the cause, and not just blindly attempt to relieve the symptoms. Otherwise, ineffective treatments could be due to a missed diagnosis. Also, we may approach pain from a vertebral problem differently than we do pain of unknown origin.

Rating the Pain & Measuring Progress

For each pain location, I have patients rate the severity on a scale of 1–10. A "10" would be the worst pain possible, like giving birth or a kidney stone. Once we know the degree of pain for each site, we can assess how much the acupuncture treatment changed it. It's nice when there's an immediate improvement of 20–30%, or even 100%, which happens in some cases.

Sometimes, the patient can't reproduce the pain on the table because of posture, so we have to wait until the treatment is over. If possible, we can needle so that measuring progress is easier. For example, if your pain is worse when walking, we can needle your hand (this is distal needling– needling away from the site of pain– another topic entirely) while you walk around. Then we can tell immediately if we're on the right track or not.

Complementary Pain Management

At the same time, you may do other therapies. You might be looking into surgery, or other solutions– for example, than is a synthetic knee injection for people with very little knee cartilage. The synthetic fluid

lasts for several months.

Interestingly, researchers have found that back pain does not always correlate to changes in the spine. They've found many people with vertebral problems that have no pain at all, and that some people with constant pain have no obvious structural changes.

To me, this underlines the primacy of the nervous system. Your brain interprets and creates nerve signals. Sometimes pain has to be "unlearned." This process may be accomplished with acupuncture alone, or in combination with counseling, meditation, or hypnosis.

In some situations, physical rehabilitation is indicated. Specific exercises prescribed by a trained physical therapist may help you regain strength and function in the affected part of the body. You may also avail yourself of the slow, demanding, and healing movements of Taichi.

The Process of Pain Control

For some people, pain goes away immediately, and they are otherwise healthy. In that case, their partnership with the acupuncturist may come to an end.

But, others are stuck with chronic pain, and need continual treatment to experience a better quality of life. In these cases, it may be better to see the acupuncturist every other day for concentrated therapy—we're more likely to shift the body's neurological patterns that way. If that doesn't work, the acupuncturist may help you purchase a microcurrent or tens unit—these are electrical stimulator pads that you can use at home (or, in fact, anywhere) to keep the pain at bay. The pads are applied to specific points according to the theories of Chinese medicine.

For those whose pain is cause or greatly influenced by emotional and mental factors, Chinese medicine can recommend dietary changes and new emotional habits. Taichi and meditation can have a normalizing effect on the nervous and immune systems as well.

Acupuncturist, herbalist, and medical professor Brian B. Carter founded the alternative health megasite The Pulse of Oriental Medicine (<http://www.PulseMed.org/>). He is the author of the book "Powerful Body, Peaceful Mind: How to Heal Yourself with Foods, Herbs, and Acupressure" (November, 2004). Brian speaks on radio across the country, and has been quoted and interviewed by Real Simple, Glamour, and ESPN magazines.

Can Acupuncture Cure Me?

By Jerry Hall

Acupuncture has been used by millions of American patients and performed by thousands of physicians, dentists, acupuncturists, and other practitioners for relief or prevention of pain and for a variety of health conditions. After reviewing the existing body of knowledge, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently removed acupuncture needles from the category of "experimental medical devices" and now regulates them just as it does other devices, such as surgical scalpels and

Acupuncture and Pain Relief

hypodermic syringes, under good manufacturing practices and single–use standards of sterility.

Over the years, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has funded a variety of research projects on acupuncture, including studies on the mechanisms by which acupuncture may produce its effects, as well as clinical trials and other studies. There is also a considerable body of international literature on the risks and benefits of acupuncture, and the World Health Organization lists a variety of medical conditions that may benefit from the use of acupuncture or moxibustion. Such applications include prevention and treatment of nausea and vomiting; treatment of pain and addictions to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs; treatment of pulmonary problems such as asthma and bronchitis; and rehabilitation from neurological damage such as that caused by stroke.

Efficacy of a treatment assesses the differential effect of a treatment when compared with placebo or another treatment modality using a double–blind controlled trial and a rigidly defined protocol. Papers should describe enrollment procedures, eligibility criteria, description of the clinical characteristics of the subjects, methods for diagnosis, and a description of the protocol (i.e., randomization method, specific definition of treatment, and control conditions, including length of treatment and number of acupuncture sessions). Optimal trials should also use standardized outcomes and appropriate statistical analyses. This assessment of efficacy focuses on high–quality trials comparing acupuncture with sham acupuncture or placebo.

There is clear evidence that needle acupuncture is efficacious for adult postoperative and chemotherapy nausea and vomiting and probably for the nausea of pregnancy.

Much of the research is on various pain problems. There is evidence of efficacy for postoperative dental pain. There are reasonable studies (although sometimes only single studies) showing relief of pain with acupuncture on diverse pain conditions such as menstrual cramps, tennis elbow, and fibromyalgia. This suggests that acupuncture may have a more general effect on pain. However, there are also studies that do not find efficacy for acupuncture in pain.

There is evidence that acupuncture does not demonstrate efficacy for cessation of smoking and may not be efficacious for some other conditions.

Although many other conditions have received some attention in the literature and, in fact, the research suggests some exciting potential areas for the use of acupuncture, the quality or quantity of the research evidence is not sufficient to provide firm evidence of efficacy at this time.

Acupuncture originated in China more than 2,000 years ago, making it one of the oldest and most commonly used medical procedures in the world. Does it Really Work? Find out at



This Free E-Book has been brought to you by Natural-Aging.com.

[100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment](#)
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!