



Acupuncture in Medicine

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Abstract:

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) consists of herb, acupuncture, and Tuina (a kind of massage). Today TCM is very popular. In Thailand there are eight colleges of TCM. Three-month course of training acupuncture for doctors was firstly opened in 1998. The course consists of basic theory of TCM e.g. Yin – Yang, Five Elements, Five Organs, Qi Blood and Essence, Twelve Meridians, Extra Meridians, Acupuncture Points, Tongue and Pulse Diagnosis, etc. After learning basic theory, the trainees have to practice needling and then treating patients with acupuncture.

Keywords: Acupuncture, Medicine, Definite treatment

Introduction

TCM has a long history more than 2500 years. Acupuncture originated in China and spread in Asia. Acupuncture spread to Europe in the early seventeenth century with skepticism of effectiveness.¹ In the USA, acupuncture has been more interesting since President Nixon's trip to China in 1972.² When Miriam Lee went to California USA, acupuncture was illegal. She was arrested for practicing medicine without a license in 1974. The legislators reached a compromise with Governor Reagan, and acupuncture was made an "experimental procedure" which could be carried out as research.³ Acupuncture treatment has been proven by many research or study. In 1996, WHO reviewed the clinical practice of acupuncture, focusing on the

controlled clinical trial.¹ Many research and study make us understanding the mechanism and effectiveness of acupuncture more clearly.^{1,2} In Thailand there are eight colleges of TCM. Three-month course of training acupuncture for doctors was firstly opened in 1998. Some of army doctors attended the three-month course of training acupuncture. The course consists of basic theory of TCM e.g., Yin – Yang, Five Elements, Five Organs, Qi Blood and Essence, Twelve Meridians, Extra Meridians, Acupuncture Points, Tongue and Pulse Diagnosis, etc. After learning basic theory, the trainees have to practice needling and then treating patients with acupuncture. Royal Thai Army Medical Department (RTAMD) has opened the three-month

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course of training acupuncture for army doctors since 2007, and continues the training till now.

Conditions for acupuncture

The clinical conditions have been classified into 4 categories:¹

1. The clinical conditions for which acupuncture has been proved to be an effective treatment: adverse reactions to radiotherapy and/or chemotherapy, allergic rhinitis (including hay fever), biliary colic, depression (including depressive neurosis and depression following stroke), dysentery (acute bacillary), dysmenorrhea (primary), acute epigastralgia (including peptic ulcer, acute and chronic gastritis, and gastro-spasm), facial pain (including craniomandibular disorders), headache, hypertension (essential), hypotension (primary), induction of labor, knee pain, leukopenia, low back pain, malposition of fetus (correction of), morning sickness, nausea and vomiting, neck pain, pain in dentistry (including dental pain and temporomandibular dysfunction), periarthritis of shoulder, postoperative pain, renal colic, rheumatoid arthritis, sciatica, sprain, stroke, and tennis elbow.

2. The clinical conditions for which acupuncture has shown the therapeutic effect but additional controlled studies are needed: abdominal pain (in acute gastroenteritis or due to gastrointestinal spasm), acne vulgaris, alcohol dependence and detoxification, Bell's palsy, bronchial asthma, cancer pain, cardiac neurosis, cholecystitis (chronic, with acute exacerbation), cholelithiasis, competition stress syndrome, craniocerebral injury (closed), diabetes mellitus (non-insulin dependent), earache, epidemic hemorrhagic fever, epistaxis (simple, without generalized or local disease), eye pain due to subconjunctival injection, female infertility, facial spasm, female urethral syndrome, fibromyalgia and fasciitis, gastro-kinetic disturbance, gouty arthritis, hepatitis B virus carrier status,

varicella-zoster virus (*human alphaherpesvirus 3*), hyperlipemia, hypo-ovarianism, insomnia, labor pain, lactation (deficiency), male sexual dysfunction (non-organic), Ménière disease, neuralgia (post-herpetic), neurodermatitis, obesity, opium, cocaine and heroin dependence, osteoarthritis, pain due to endoscopic examination, pain in thromboangiitis obliterans, polycystic ovary syndrome (Stein–Leventhal syndrome), postextubation in children, postoperative convalescence, premenstrual syndrome, prostatitis (chronic), pruritus, radicular and pseudoradicular pain syndrome, Raynaud syndrome (primary), recurrent lower urinary tract infection, reflex sympathetic dystrophy, retention of urine (traumatic), schizophrenia, sialism (drug-induced), Sjögren syndrome, sore throat (including tonsillitis), spine pain (acute), stiff neck, temporomandibular joint dysfunction, Tietze syndrome, tobacco dependence, Tourette syndrome, ulcerative colitis (chronic), urolithiasis, vascular dementia, and whooping cough (pertussis).

3. The clinical conditions for which there are only individual controlled trials reporting some therapeutic effects, but for which acupuncture is worth trying because conventional treatment and other therapy is difficult: chloasma, choroidopathy (central serous), colorblindness, deafness, hypophrenia, irritable colon syndrome, neuropathic bladder in spinal cord injury, pulmonary heart disease (chronic), and small airway obstruction.

4. The clinical conditions in which acupuncture may be tried provided the practitioner has special modern medical knowledge and adequate monitoring equipment: breathlessness in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, coma, convulsions in infants, coronary heart disease (angina pectoris), diarrhea in infants and young children, encephalitis (viral, in children, late stage), and paralysis (progressive bulbar and pseudobulbar).

Acupuncture technique

The technique of acupuncture is simple and safe. The result is instant.⁴ When I started treatment with acupuncture, I found that most patients came to the acupuncture clinic with the problem of pain and stroke sequelae. Pain and stroke are the condition that acupuncture is effective treatment, but the course of treatment and the result depend on the duration of the illness, age, and physical status of the patient. The onset of stroke within three months is good for acupuncture. If the patient is late, the result will be less. If the patient is young or physical status is good, the healing will be better. There are many types of acupuncture: eye acupuncture, scalp acupuncture, hand acupuncture, abdominal acupuncture, wrist and ankle acupuncture, ear or auricular acupuncture, tongue acupuncture, Tung's style acupuncture, balance method acupuncture, and etc. The acupuncturist can combine two or three types of acupuncture for better result.

Limitation

The limitation of acupuncture is the experience of the acupuncturist. If the diagnosis is correct, the treatment will be effective. For me the TCM diagnosis is hard to understand. I have to read the TCM book again and again and compare it to the modern medicine because I have to simplify the knowledge for the medical students taking elective course of acupuncture. The technique of needling is also important. The acupuncturist should know the depth of insertion, how to reinforce or how to reduce, duration to retain the needle, and the frequency of treatment. Usually the action of acupuncture pertains for two to three days, so the optimum frequency is two to three times per week.

Effects of acupuncture

Acupuncture by the well-trained person is safe and effective. The action of acupuncture is bidirectional. For example, when needling

at Neiguan which effects the heart rate, it can adjust the heart rate to be normal either fast or slow.⁵ The needle used in acupuncture is sterile and disposable. The diameter of the needle is 0.16–0.3 millimeter, smaller than the injection needle, so it is hard to be injured. When the patient is needled, the patient will feel dull or electrical or sharping sensation that means good. This feeling is called De Qi which means the energy is arrived. The result of acupuncture is dramatic. Many patients were relieved from shoulder pain by the first time of acupuncture. Besides treating pain, acupuncture regulates physiological function, such as asthma, arrhythmia, allergic rhinitis, vertigo, etc.^{1,2} The duration and frequency of treatment which may be 2-3 times per week for 4 weeks makes a course of treatment. Usually when one course of treatment is done, the patient has to rest for 1-2 weeks, before starting the next course of treatment.

Preparation before acupuncture

The treatment is not done by the doctor only, multidisciplinary team makes holistic treatment and the patient's duty is to adjust the bad habits. The patient should do these things: relax the mind and body, optimum healthy meal, optimal exercise or physical therapy appropriate to age and clinical condition, seven-hour of sleeping. The medical team should coach the patient. The patient and medical team should plan and set a goal, check and adjust to get it. The combination of acupuncture with modern medicine, is considered to be integrative medicine.

Conclusion

Acupuncture is proved to be the definite treatment for some diseases and can be the alternative treatment. For better result of treatment, combined acupuncture with modern medicine to make holistic approach. I hope that the integrative medicine with acupuncture is widely accepted.

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