



Chinese Medicine News

from the office of Michael Waterhouse, MA, OMD, LAc

TREAT YOUR JOINTS TO ACUPUNCTURE

Inevitably as we get older our joints seem to stiffen and become prone to acheiness and injury. This wear and tear is seen in Chinese medicine as a stagnation of the free flow of the circulation of blood and energy through the body, a lack of "moisture of the tendons". There are a number of different ways to counteract these problems. These include Chinese herbal remedies that promote circulation and reduce chronic inflammation, modern nutritional supplements such as Glucosamine and Chondroitin sulphates and changing the emphasis of our workout routine to include lower impact routines like Tai Chi, yoga, hiking, swimming and using lighter weights with more reps and adding more stretching before and after workouts.

When a particular joint becomes consistently painful as a result of Osteoarthritis or from a sports injury, acupuncture is a time-honored method of resolving pain and restoring normal range of motion. When I started practice almost thirty years

ago such claims would have would have caused a skeptical eyebrow to be raised within the medical community. Thanks to a number of recent studies on "tennis elbow" (Rheumatology 2002;41: 205-9), "frozen shoulder" (Hong Kong Medical Jnl. 2001;7;381-91.), osteoarthritis of the knee (American Academy of Pain Medicine) and osteoarthritis of the hip (Medical Acupuncture 2001;19:1: 19-26), acupuncture for these kind of conditions has entered the medical mainstream.

There are two more notable facts emerging from this research. The first is that there have been studies using acupuncture for pain control in patients who were awaiting replacement of the hip and knee, who in spite of the advanced state of the disease received significant pain relief which in some cases obviated the need for surgery and in more cases delayed the need for surgery which, given the lifespan of a replaced joint, can be a very important consideration. Regarding the second fact: acupuncturists have always recommended regular follow up visits in order to maintain or improve upon the progress made by the initial group of 6-10 visits. This advice was confirmed by a study on chronic osteoarthritis of the knee carried out at the University of Maryland Medical School. In this study the group that had received acupuncture for the initial two-month period were further divided into a group that continued to have acupuncture one time per month for one year and a group that had no further treatment for a year. The first group either maintained or improved upon their initial gains in health whilst the non-treatment group showed a worsening of their pain scores.

ACUPUNCTURE AND JAW PAIN: T.M.J. SYNDROME.

The temporomandibular joint (TMJ) or jaw joint is the most complex joint in the body in that it both pivots and slides. While we talk, eat, swallow, yawn and even snore the joint is used over two thousand times per day. It should be no surprise then that people frequently complain of jaw pain that can often radiate to cause neck and head pain. Night grinding (bruxism) or clenching your jaw during the day as a result of stress or controlled anger is a major cause of this condition. Dental problems that result in a misaligned bite can further exacerbate these symptoms.

A visit to an experienced dentist for a night guard mouth piece is a first step in treatment. Looking at ways in which you can counteract stress in your life such as the regular use of biofeedback, yoga, tai chi, meditation is another good idea. My own experience treating this problem with acupuncture has been extremely positive and there are a number of recent studies that echo my experience. Please feel free to talk to me if you have any questions about this syndrome.



The Newsletter will be published several times per year to inform patients at the Rochford Clinic and those interested of current events in the rapidly evolving world of Chinese Medicine. Please feel free to talk to me if you need more information or have questions about this or related fields. If you would like to receive this or future issues by e mail please leave your address at the reception desk. You can always contact me via e mail or through my web site.

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