

Orthopaedic Connection

Orthopaedics: Acupuncture?

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

I get asked occasionally whether someone should try acupuncture for a particular Orthopaedic problem I am treating. I'm sure there are a lot more people out there who might like to know also.

There is a difference though. I don't believe in acupuncture for anything that ails you, as some do.

If I have examined the person and know what the diagnosis is, I may agree they can try it if they want to. That is a key point. I am not recommending it too often, but am willing to go along with it if the patient desires.

What is it?

It is the use of carefully placed needles to relieve pain and improve functioning. Hmm. Anybody coming to my office will see a banner at check out, "Our goal is simple – To help people return to more pain free, functional lives." A National health survey discovered that 8 million patients in the United States have used acupuncture. It originated in China more than 2 thousand years ago.

How does it work?

It is based on the theory that essential life energy called qi flows through the body across 12 major pathways or meridians. The meridians correspond to specific organs and body functions.

Inserting very fine needles at specific acupoints along these meridians corrects the flow of qi, if blocked. Exactly how this blocks pain and turns pain signals off, no one knows.

Western doctors believe the needle stick at an acupoint causes the central nervous system to release endorphins. Endorphins are substances all of us have in our bodies, which are morphine like that work in us as our body's natural pain killers.

Acupuncture Targets

Acupuncture has been used in Orthopaedic Surgery to relieve the pain and stiffness associated with arthritis or injury.

The World Health Organization recommends acupuncture for orthopaedic problems and many other conditions. The U.S. National Institutes of Health Consensus Statement on Acupuncture said the therapy shows considerable promise.

Obviously there is some merit to it. Our Western doctors traveling in China have often observed major surgery being performed using it instead of anesthesia.

What to expect

The needles used for acupuncture are very thin. Sterile single use needles must be used through sterilized skin.

You feel a tiny prick as the needles are inserted, but it should not be painful if the needles are placed in the proper point. Improper needle placement can cause pain. This is why you must be treated by a qualified acupuncture practitioner.

Should I try it?

I tell my patients to go ahead. I have never seen anyone's condition get worse. I have seen rare infections from less than sterile technique. Patients must be aware of this.

Certification

Forty states have training standards and regulate the profession of Acupuncture.

Certification for a formally trained acupuncturist is through the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

More Information

American Association of Oriental Medicine, www.aaom.org.

American Academy of Medical Acupuncture, www.medicalacupuncture.org.

UCLA Center of East-West Medicine, www.cewm.med.ucla.edu.

My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website.

I sincerely appreciate all of you loyal readers and patients present and future and welcome all newcomers!

Besides what you read today there is a huge treasure trove of Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal information at www.orthopodsurgeon.com. It contains the Website Library, Your Orthopaedic Connection and complete archive of every GCH article I have written.

I specialize in you. Be well.

Dr. Haverbush