

Acupuncture: The Art of Ancient Chinese Medicine

Background:

- Acupuncture, as defined from the online Merriam-Webster dictionary is, “an originally Chinese practice of inserting fine needles through the skin at specific points especially to cure disease or relieve pain (as in surgery).”
- A more descriptive definition of how acupuncture works:
 - “The classical Chinese explanation is that channels of energy run in regular patterns through the body and over its surface. These energy channels, called meridians, are like rivers flowing through the body to irrigate and nourish the tissues. An obstruction in the movement of these energy rivers is like a dam that backs up in others” (American Academy of Medical Acupuncture, 1997-2006).
 - “The meridians can be influenced by needling the acupuncture points; the acupuncture needles unblock the obstructions at the dams, and reestablish the regular flow through the meridians. Acupuncture treatments can therefore help the body's internal organs to correct imbalances in their digestion, absorption, and energy production activities and in the circulation of their energy through the meridians” (American Academy of Medical Acupuncture, 1997-2006).
- Acupuncture is one of the oldest and most frequently used forms of medicine procedure that originated in China about 2,000 years ago. (NCCAM, 2006)
- American acupuncture mainly combines the traditions of acupuncture from China, Japan, Korea and other countries. (NCCAM, 2006)
- According to the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture from 1997-2006, “The World Health Organization recognizes the use of acupuncture in the treatment of a wide range of

medical problems, including (this chart was taken directly from

http://medicalacupuncture.org/acu_info/articles/nccaminfo.html):

Conditions Appropriate for Acupuncture Therapy			
Digestive Abdominal pain Constipation Diarrhea Hyperacidity Indigestion	Emotional Anxiety Depression Insomnia Nervousness Neurosis	Eye-Ear-Nose-Throat Cataracts Gingivitis Poor vision Tinnitus Toothache	Gynecological Infertility Menopausal symptoms Premenstrual syndrome
Miscellaneous Addiction control Athletic performance Blood pressure regulation Chronic fatigue Immune system tonification Stress reduction	Musculoskeletal Arthritis Back pain Muscle cramping Muscle pain/weakness Neck pain Sciatica	<u>Neurological</u> Headaches Migraines Neurogenic Bladder dysfunction Parkinson's disease Postoperative pain Stroke	Respiratory Asthma Bronchitis Common cold Sinusitis Smoking cessation Tonsillitis
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Statement of Issue or Policy:

- The main problems that are apparent in the discussion of acupuncture are the safety of the procedure and whether or not acupuncture is an effective form of treatment.
- In terms of safety, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the use of acupuncture needles by licensed practitioners in 1996. The requirements of this approval are that the needles have to be nontoxic, sterile and used only one time. (NCCAM, 2006)
- Infection due to improper sterilization and organ puncture are the main safety hazards from acupuncture. As long as the licensed practitioners follow the FDA requirements there is a reduced risk for complications. (NCCAM, 2006)

- Due to the wide range of entities that acupuncture treats, the effectiveness of the treatment is difficult to access. There is some evidence of acupuncture's efficacy in relation to certain ailments. Most of the research completed on this topic refers to one of the various methods of administering acupuncture, the needle insertion method (as discussed in the background section). (NIH, 1997)
- “There is clear evidence that needle acupuncture is efficacious for adult postoperative and chemotherapy nausea and vomiting and probably for the nausea of pregnancy” (NIH, 1997).
- “There are other situations--such as addiction, stroke rehabilitation, headache, menstrual cramps, tennis elbow, fibromyalgia, myofascial pain, osteoarthritis, low-back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and asthma--in which acupuncture may be useful as an adjunct treatment or an acceptable alternative or be included in a comprehensive management program” (NCCAM, 2006).

Epidemiological Picture:

- Overall, the use of acupuncture has grown greatly in the United States. (NCCAM, 2006)
- “The report from a Consensus Development Conference on Acupuncture held at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 1997 stated that acupuncture is being “widely” practiced--by thousands of physicians, dentists, acupuncturists, and other practitioners--for relief or prevention of pain and for various other health conditions”(NCCAM, 2006).
- “According to the 2002 National Health Interview Survey--the largest and most comprehensive survey of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) use by American adults to date--an estimated 8.2 million U.S. adults had ever used acupuncture, and an estimated 2.1 million U.S. adults had used acupuncture in the previous year” (NCCAM, 2006).

Solutions:

- Acupuncture itself is not the problem so finding solutions involved the way it is administered, guidelines for finding treatment, the educational requirements necessary for a practitioner to attain licensure, and increasing availability of services through insurance coverage.
- As previously discussed, the FDA requirements are in place to ensure safe administration of acupuncture.
- “Use of acupuncture needles should always follow FDA regulations, including use of sterile, single-use needles” (NIH, 1997).
- There are resources available through State jurisdictions that allow patients to report any inconsistency to the FDA requirements. (NIH, 1997)
- A guideline that should always be followed is to have clear communication between the practitioner and the patient must be in place. “Patients should be fully informed of their treatment options, expected prognosis, relative risk, and safety practices to minimize these risks before their receipt of acupuncture. This information must be provided in a manner that is linguistically and culturally appropriate to the patient” (NIH, 1997).
- The patient should also make sure that they check the credentials of the practitioner and that they do not solely rely on a diagnosis received by an acupuncturist unless they also have considerable medical training. (NCCAM, 2006)
- “Educational standards have been established for training of physician and non-physician acupuncturists. Many acupuncture educational programs are accredited by an agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. A national credentialing agency exists for nonphysician practitioners and provides examinations for entry-level competency in the field. A nationally recognized examination for physician acupuncturists has been established” (NIH, 1997).

- To increase the access of acupuncture to those patients who cannot afford the services
“insurance companies can decrease or remove financial barriers to access depending on their willingness to provide coverage for appropriate acupuncture services” (NIH, 1997).
- “As acupuncture is incorporated into today's health care system, and further research clarifies the role of acupuncture for various health conditions, it is expected that dissemination of this information to health care practitioners, insurance providers, policymakers, and the general public will lead to more informed decisions in regard to the appropriate use of acupuncture” (NIH, 1997).

Internet Resources:

1. National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine, National Institute of Health

<http://nccam.nih.gov>

“The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) is the Federal Government's lead agency for scientific research on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). We are 1 of the 27 institutes and centers that make up the National Institutes of Health (NIH) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The mission of NCCAM is to:

- Explore complementary and alternative healing practices in the context of rigorous science.
- Train complementary and alternative medicine researchers.
- Disseminate authoritative information to the public and professionals. (NCCAM About, 2006)” <http://nccam.nih.gov/about/ata glance/>

2. Alternative Medicine Foundation, Inc.

<http://www.amfoundation.org/acupuncture.htm>

This Web site provides information a general resource page for acupuncture. The topics discussed include the history of acupuncture and an extensive display of books, organizations, and websites where you can find a great amount of information on acupuncture.

3. American Academy of Medical Acupuncture

<http://medicalacupuncture.org>

"The purpose of the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture is to promote the integration of concepts from traditional and modern forms of acupuncture with Western medical training and thereby synthesize a more comprehensive approach to health care. (American Academy of Medical Acupuncture, 1997-2006). The [Doctor What's Acupuncture](#) article is extremely helpful in finding out the basics of acupuncture.

Bibliography:

American Academy of Medical Acupuncture (1997-2006) "DOCTOR, WHAT'S THIS ACUPUNCTURE ALL ABOUT?" April 23, 2007
http://medicalacupuncture.org/acu_info/articles/aboutacupuncture.html

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Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2006-7) Definition of Acupuncture April 23, 2007 <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/Acupuncture>

National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), National Institute of Health (2006) Get the Facts: Acupuncture April 23, 2007 <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/acupuncture/>

National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), National Institute of Health (2007) NCCAM Facts-at-a-Glance and Mission April 24, 2007 <http://nccam.nih.gov/about/ata glance/>

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) (1997) Acupuncture April 24, 2007
<http://consensus.nih.gov/1997/1997Acupuncture107html.htm>

Back to Betty C. Jung's Web site	http://www.bettyjung.net/
Back to Fact Sheet Directory	http://www.bettyjung.net/Pch202fs.htm

Acupuncture (Class Handout)



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