

Dr. Brenda Yanofsky
Acupuncture Physician

Acupuncture Theory & Practice

By Gail Cameron Somodi, Senior Editor

Acupuncture is a form of medicine that has been practiced for over 5,000 years and is steadily gaining acceptance in many sectors of contemporary medicine. It is a key component of the traditional Chinese medicine system which views the body as a delicate balance of two opposing and inseparable forces: yin and yang. Acupuncture practitioners believe our physical bodies have an intelligent energy called Qi or Chi and that our health is influenced by the quality, quantity and balance of Chi.

They posit that Chi flows within us in meridians, each connected to specific organs and glands. When it is balanced and flowing freely, the body does well and health is fully expressed.

The diagnosis skills that acupuncturists use to evaluate the flow and balance of Chi throughout the body involve the four main techniques of; pulse diagnosis, looking, asking and physical examination. Although the word acupuncture is usually associated with using needles, there are many methods that fall under the scope of acupuncture that do not use them. Nutritional medicine and oriental massage are also part of acupuncture. Acupuncture is often used to treat children, sometimes using magnets instead of needles.

Acupuncture has proven to be an effective treatment for many common problems according to the National Institutes of Health and the World Health Organization.

The NIH Consensus Statement on Acupuncture shows efficacy of acupuncture, for example, in adult postoperative and chemotherapy nausea and vomiting and postoperative dental pain. (<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/acupuncture/>) Other situations in which acupuncture may be useful, according to the NIH, include addiction, stroke rehabilitation, headache, menstrual cramps,



tennis elbow, fibromyalgia, myofascial pain, osteoarthritis, lowback pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and asthma.

It is hypothesized that acupuncture works by regulating the nervous system by aiding the activity of pain-killing biochemicals such as endorphins and immune system cells. Studies have shown that acupuncture may alter brain chemistry by changing the release of neurotransmitters and neurohormones, affecting the parts of the central nervous system related to sensation and involuntary body functions. Counseling is also part of acupuncture since every organ is based on an emotion in Chinese medicine. For example, the liver is green and represents anger and the immune system. There are over 100 acupuncture points in the ear alone. Acupuncturists envision the ear like an upside down fetus, the location of the ear's acupuncture points correspond to parts of the body.

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pational license with broad parameters. She noted that acupuncture physicians must have malpractice insurance and the federal Occupational Health and Safety Administration regulates the proper use of needles. The needles are sterile, disposable and are only used once. She predicted that in the future eastern and western medicine will be used more frequently together with excellent results for patients. When considering Chinese medicine Yanofsky said, "Wipe everything out of your mind, and start over." Evaluate the practitioner's training and realize that insurance coverage is becoming more common. "Wipe everything out of your mind and start over," she said. In her practice, Yanofsky uses aromatherapy and music. She checks the pulse in six places, examines the tongue and skin, performs a physical exam and takes a medical history. From the information gathered, she determines the appropriate diagnosis and course of treatment. ■

Key acupuncture terms:

Acupuncture (needle) involves treatment of meridian pathways with fine, hairlike sterile acupuncture needles to stimulate the smooth flow of Chi.

With **cupping**, no needle is involved. Problems regarding the back, neck and shoulder can be treated with this method, a vacuum is created which brings blood to the surface for detoxification.

Ear candling is used for ear wax removal and treating sinus conditions. A hollow paraffin tube is placed carefully in the ear. Heat from the candle creates a vacuum and melts the ear wax which rises and can then be removed from the ear.

Moxibustion is also available. Dried leaf of Mugwort is rolled in sticks and placed strategically on the patient's body and burned to treat numerous conditions such as impotence, fatigue and diarrhea.

The **Acuscope/myopulse** is a piece of pain relief equipment with two-way communication between the machine's computer circuitry and the patient's body to measure tissue conductivity. It is used to treat injuries from automobile accidents, arthritis and problems of the back, neck and knee.

Electrostimulation can treat stroke symptoms, transmitting a frequency to the patient but not reading the patient's frequency.