

Acupuncture Research Update

"Quiet thoughts mend the body." - Chinese Proverb

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Acupuncture for Knee Osteoarthritis



In a study published by *Acupuncture in Medicine*, researchers found the use of acupuncture, in the treatment of knee osteoarthritis, was superior to not using any acupuncture whatsoever. They also concluded this evidence is consistent with all other current evidence regarding this matter. According to the study, after 12 weeks of treatments, subjects reported their knee pain was greatly reduced. The reported success rate of pain relief in the patients that received acupuncture treatments was 76 percent, while the success rates of the control group that did not receive acupuncture was only 32 percent. As a side note, several patients also reported some secondary complaints seemed to be less bothersome. These results are very positive and it shows acupuncture is more likely to provide relief, even in patients with severe osteoarthritis.

Osteoarthritis of the knees is very prevalent in today's society. According to the American College of Rheumatology, nearly 30 million people are affected with this degenerative joint disease. Knee osteoarthritis is characterized by pain, swelling, decreased range of motion and stiffness in the joint itself. This can also sometimes lead to the development of bone spurs.

Traditional Chinese Medicine looks at afflictions much differently than Western medicine. In TCM, osteoarthritis is categorized as a Bi (pronounced "bee") syndrome. According to TCM, Bi syndromes are typically caused by a combination of cold, dampness and wind. Bi syndromes are disorders that occur due to obstruction of the energetic meridians or pathways. The Qi (pronounced "chee"), also known as the energy or life force, tends to become blocked due to swelling or immobilization of the joint. Also a lack of blood circulation may oftentimes be a contributing factor.

There tend to be three phases of most Bi syndromes, the attack phase, the recovery phase and the stabilization phase. The attack phase is when the most swelling and pain are evident. In the recovery phase, the swelling tends to be less or completely dissipated and the pain and stiffness are the main symptoms. The final phase, the stabilization phase, may have all symptoms except swelling. All three phases may last from several days to several months.

There are different approaches to all three phases regarding the possible treatment options. During the attack phase, acupuncture with electrostimulation, cupping and even bleeding techniques are recommended and usually the most effective. During the recovery phase, acupuncture with electrostimulation tends to be the most beneficial. And finally, during the stabilization phase, acupuncture may be applied to the muscles, ligaments and tendons surrounding the knee joint, which can help to restore or rebuild normal functioning of the areas.

Many times those who suffer from osteoarthritis also need some nutritional counseling and weight management training. Even five extra pounds can create excess stress on the joints. And as demonstrated in the research study, acupuncture can be an excellent addition for the management of symptoms associated with knee osteoarthritis. By making positive changes and including acupuncture treatments, osteoarthritis sufferers can effectively manage this debilitating disease.

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