

Effects of Acupuncture on Quality of Life in Patient with Depression



A study published by the Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine and conducted by the West China Center of Medical Sciences in 2015, found acupuncture treatments can be effective in the treatment of patients suffering from depression. According to the study, 163 participants were divided into three groups. Each group received differing forms of treatment utilizing acupuncture or acupuncture and other accessory modalities, twice a week, for a total of 12 weeks. The scale of life was used to evaluate the results at four different times, which allowed for the patients quality of life to be objectively followed and determined. There were eight specific items that were evaluated after each acupuncture treatment, thus leading to the overall quality of life score. The items evaluated were physical function, bodily pain, physical role, general physical condition, social function,

energy, mental health and emotional function. The study showed the overall quality of life score was improved significantly in all three groups.

Depression is defined as a mental disorder characterized by feelings of dejection and severe despondency. Worldwide, nearly 350 million people suffer from depression and nearly 16 million of those are in the United States alone. Statistics show women tend to be more likely to experience depression and young adults between the ages of 18-22 are also at a higher risk. Symptoms of depression include extreme irritability over minor issues, anxiety, restlessness, irrational anger, lack of interest in everyday activities, thoughts of death, insomnia, severe fatigue, weight gain/loss, difficulty concentrating and unexplained aches and pains. When these symptoms occur for more than a few weeks, depression may be the reason behind them.

As shown in the aforementioned study, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is very effective in treating depression, not only short-term, but also long-term. Modern medicine usually treats depression with antidepressants and psychotherapy regardless of the presenting symptoms. In contrast, TCM diagnoses each patient on an individual basis and treats the specific symptoms, while also addressing the root of the illness. TCM incorporates multiple modalities such as acupuncture, Chinese herbs, tuina massage, cupping and exercises like qigong to help restore balance to the body. Traditional Chinese medicine also treats the person holistically instead of treating mind and body separately.

The theory behind treating depression using TCM, all revolves around the concept of Qi (pronounced "chee"). Qi is considered the vital energy that flows through the body and animates everything. When Qi is blocked or stagnant, illness can take root, either physically or mentally. Qi flows throughout the body on energetic pathways or meridians. Each energetic meridian is associated with an organ and each organ has its own emotion. For example, the emotion of the liver meridian is anger. When Qi is blocked and liver Qi stagnation occurs, anger can then manifest. From the same standpoint, if a person is excessively angry, the flow of Qi can be blocked creating stagnation.

Acupuncture releases endorphins and activates natural pain killers. By doing so, it improves the flow of Qi throughout the body while eliminating blockages and bringing balance to the mind and body. Endorphins counter the symptoms of depression and allow the person to resume a normal life.

If you are suffering from depression and are looking for a natural way of dealing with it, contacting a licensed acupuncturist might be exactly what you need. A local acupuncturist can help you navigate the waters of depression without the harmful side effects of pharmaceuticals, while helping you get back to a happier life.

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