

# Acupuncture Research Update

"Cure sometimes, treat often, comfort always" - Hippocrates

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## Acupuncture and Heart Health



**R**esearchers from the Tianjin University of Chinese Medicine tested the efficacy of acupuncture, herbs and drug therapy for heart health, and what they found was incredible. The addition of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) therapies increased patient outcomes by 28 percent, with regards to arrhythmias, palpitations and tachycardia. The researchers tested prescription medications alone and with the addition of acupuncture and herbs. In this study, the addition of acupuncture and herbs increased the positive effect and decreased the symptoms the patients were experiencing. The researchers used the exact same protocol for all patients involved in the study. The same acupuncture points, herbal formula and pharmaceuticals were used on all participants. For the treatment group, the effective rate was 92 percent overall.

Traditional Chinese Medicine, just like Western medicine, believes the heart is responsible for the circulation of blood. When the heart is strong, circulation will be sufficient, the body will be well-nourished and the pulse will reflect that by being full and regular. Both medical systems agree that a weak heart can manifest as palpitations, chest pain and even heart disease or a heart attack. Where the two medical systems differ is this: TCM also acknowledges that the heart "houses the mind".

In TCM, the heart and the mind are virtually inseparable. The heart governs the ability to think clearly, sleep soundly and maintain a good memory. Our emotional state is strongly influenced by how healthy or unhealthy our heart may be. A weak and deficient heart may create feelings of anxiety and mania, while also contributing to insomnia, forgetfulness and lack of concentration.

Heart health can be reflected in the facial complexion also. A nice rosy complexion indicates a strong healthy heart, while a pale or sallow complexion is indicative of a deficient, weak heart. If the heart blood becomes stagnant, the complexion may have a purplish tint. When the complexion is reddish, this may indicate heart heat.

Acupuncture and TCM have been managing heart health for centuries. Regular acupuncture treatments have been found to be very helpful in lowering blood pressure. The needles stimulate the release of opioids, which then decrease the heart's activity and its need for oxygen. This in turn, helps lower blood pressure.

Stress is another factor that can greatly affect the health of the heart. Unmanaged, chronic stress can lead to heart disease, high blood pressure, heart arrhythmias and even heart attacks. Numerous studies have shown stress can be easily managed through the use of acupuncture. TCM offers more than just acupuncture to treat stress though. Herbal formulas and exercises like tai chi and qi gong are all wonderful tools for managing stress and keeping the heart healthy.

Poor sleep and insomnia has been linked to heart failure, heart attacks, high blood pressure, stroke and obesity. And yet again, TCM can help treat a wide array of sleep problems without the harsh side effects of many pharmaceuticals.

Without a healthy heart, the body cannot function properly and the mind may be clouded and disconnected. Contact a licensed acupuncturist in your area for a consultation to see how TCM can assist you with all of your heart health needs.

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