

Role Of Acupuncture In Pain Management

Dr Kavita Bhojwani

Hospital Raja Permaisuri Bainun, Ipoh

Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese practice that can be an effective complementary treatment for some chronic pain conditions including back and neck pain, osteoarthritis and headaches. There is now enough evidence showing that acupuncture is more effective than no treatment or usual care, for chronic knee pain, osteoarthritis and headaches (Sherman 2009). With regards to chronic back pain, at least for short term, acupuncture is effective (Hopton 2010)

Acupuncture is believed to stimulate the nervous system causing release of neurochemicals which influences the body's homeostatic mechanisms which promote physical and emotional well being. Stimulating certain acupoints affects areas of the brain that can reduce sensitivity to pain and stress well as promoting relaxation and deactivating the 'analytical brain' which is responsible for anxiety. Further, acupuncture can reduce pain by stimulating nerves in muscles and other tissues which leads to release of endorphins and other neurohumoral factors, thus, changing the processing of pain in the brain and spinal cord.

Acupuncture also increases the release of adenosine, which has antinociceptive properties, reduces inflammation with the release of vascular and immunomodulatory factors and improves muscle stiffness and joint mobility by increasing local microcirculation. Further research is required to understand acupuncture and to incorporate it into mainstream medicine.

References

- Sherman K et al 2009 Acupuncture for improving chronic back pain, osteoarthritis and headache J Clin Manag. 2009 May;16(5):224-230
- Chronic pain-The British Acupuncture Council <https://www.acupuncture.org.uk/at-z...conditions/a...conditions/chronic.pain.html>
- Hopton A et al 2010 Mar-Apr;10(2):94-102.doi10.1111/j.1533-2500.2009.003xEpub 2010Jan8