

Iffley Acupuncture Clinic



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Who and Why?

Who has acupuncture?

Until relatively recently acupuncture in this country was considered to be a form of 'alternative medicine' and subsequently categorized along with a range of unrelated disciplines that bore no relation to one another nor shared in its rich tradition. This banding was perhaps caused by the apprehension and even skepticism that arises when a seemingly alien practice is introduced into an established, possibly conventional and conservative culture. At best, acupuncture was classed as a form of 'complementary medicine'; the inference therefore being, that acupuncture was in place to either to complement the western allopathic system or at least work in harmony with others within the same category. Sadly these conditions seemed to limit the exposure of acupuncture to a narrow section of the community and underestimated its potential to make significant contribution to national health and wellbeing.

Today acupuncture is almost considered mainstream. The profound results experienced by the general public can no longer be disregarded as mere anecdotal evidence and some in the medical and scientific communities have now begun to pay attention to the growing body of evidence that has accumulated. (link to research) In addition the acupuncture profession has developed in such a way that the public can now be assured that competent and safe practitioners, bound by codes of practice and ethics, will treat them accordingly. Thus acupuncture is now utilized by an ever-increasing cross section of the community for a range of both physical and mental-emotional conditions. (see below)

Whilst the categorization of acupuncture as an 'alternative medicine' may have slowed its progress in the UK, it should be recognized that acupuncture does however, offer a very real alternative to the practices offered by most general practitioners within the health service. Such practices now seem largely limited to drug centered therapy based on diagnoses that are dependent upon technology, measurement and subsequent target setting. Sadly, this serves more frequently to alienate the doctor from their patients rather than endearing them. Symptoms and concerns expressed by patients are frequently disregarded because they cannot be measured, understood

and more significantly, be readily treated. It should however be noted that in China, Traditional Chinese Medicine sits happily along side our modern western medicine, indeed they appear to 'complement' one another most effectively.

Perhaps the one significant quality that acupuncture practice shares with other 'alternative' systems and practitioners, is that it recognizes that human health is not merely the absence of disease, but more the product of integration of mind and body and which in turn, leads to a sense of wellbeing, fulfillment and equanimity. Moreover, 'holistic' medicine also acknowledges that such wellbeing is dependent upon an understanding of the interrelation of humans with the natural world and in turn, living in harmony with it. The successful application of acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine is dependent upon these conditions, indeed the framework that underpins them, seeks to evaluate the interplay of mind, body and environment, and determine how a breakdown of this relationship leads to ill health. Treatment and appropriate advice follow accordingly.

Thus when patients first encounter their acupuncture practitioner, they are frequently and also pleasantly surprised to find that previously and seemingly unconnected signs and symptoms are integrated into a more complete interpretation of their situation. In addition to receiving appropriate treatment, this holistic approach enables its users to make decisions about their lifestyle and begin to take control over their lives in ways that had not previously been possible. The ensuing changes are reflected in the growing number of people seeking acupuncture and TCM as means of achieving health.

This is not say that each and everyone thinking about acupuncture need feel concerned about the possibility that they may have to make major lifestyle changes in order for acupuncture to be effective. Sometimes only minor adjustments need be considered and where a person seeks treatment for an acute condition in an otherwise healthy lifestyle, then it is unlikely there need be any change at all. Acupuncture treatment has proved itself to exert its influence regardless of lifestyle and can be used to treat a range of conditions and also exert both objective and subjective change.

Most people attending my clinic do so by way of 'word of mouth'; the clinic has been recommended by friends or families who have themselves experienced success with acupuncture. A significant number have learnt about the effectiveness of acupuncture through the media or otherwise, and have therefore sought referrals from friends, doctors or other health care practitioners. Many people have sought treatment at my clinic because they have not received satisfactory attention and or results from conventional medicine or their doctors. Or conversely, because they are experiencing unwanted side effects from the medications they have been given, in spite of the fact that they maintain good and positive relationships with their doctors. Whilst they are seeking a gentler and more holistic route, they are nevertheless expecting a successful amelioration of their conditions, illnesses, pain and suffering.

What conditions can acupuncture treat:

The reader will now be directed to two tables. The first of which will list the most commonly encountered patterns/illnesses/diseases that are treated at the Iffley Acupuncture Clinic, whilst the second lists a range of diseases that are deemed treatable through acupuncture by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Conditions frequently encountered at the clinic:

Prospective patients should remember that the conditions listed below are not definitive and they should not be deterred from seeking treatment should they find that their given problem does not appear on the list. In turn they need also be assured that when and if favourable results are not achieved, they will be advised accordingly.

Mental-Emotional Disharmony:	Anxiety, Depression (including sadness and grief), Post-natal depression, Insomnia, Stress and stress related disorders
Musculo-skeletal:	Lower back and spinal pain, Sciatica, Sports Injuries, Rheumatic aches and pains, Osteo and Rheumatoid Arthritis, Sequelae to trauma, e.g. Road traffic accidents, Repetitive strain injury, Carpal tunnel syndrome, Frozen Shoulder – tendonitis
Skin disorders and Cosmetic:	Acne, Eczema, Psoriasis, Dryness of skin, Facial rejuvenation
Circulatory:	Hypertension (high blood pressure), Palpitations: irregular heart beat and arrhythmias
Respiratory:	Common cold, Influenza, Bronchitis, Cough (acute and chronic), Sinusitis and Rhinitis, Breathlessness, Asthma
Immune deficiency and fatigue:	Tiredness and Fatigue, Chronic Fatigue including ME, CFIDS, Susceptibility to frequent infectious illnesses
Obstetric:	Pre-birth acupuncture to shorten and ease labour, Infertility, Threatened miscarriage and recurrent/ habitual miscarriage, Morning sickness, Induction of labour, Breech presentation and Malposition of foetus (turning of baby in utero), Pain relief during labour, Difficult labour, Post-natal depression, Post –natal problems with urination and bowel movements, Breast milk insufficiency and mastitis
Gynaecological:	Absence of periods (Amenorrhoea), Painful periods or (Dysmenorrhoea), Irregular periods, Delayed or early periods, Heavy periods (metorrhagia), Scanty periods, Mid-cycle bleeding Premenstrual tension/syndrome, including breast distension, Benign breast lumps, Endometriosis, Excessive vaginal discharge Vaginal Thrush, Candida and vaginal itching, Pelvic inflammatory disease, Menopausal syndrome,
Neurological:	Headache, Migraine, Eye pain, Trigeminal neuralgia, Intercostal neuralgia, Neuralgia , Facial paralysis (Bells palsy)
Pain:	Abdominal, Epigastric (beneath ribs), Hypochondria (flank and rib pain), Hypogastric (below the abdomen), Chest pain, Face, Head, Limbs and body pain.
Gastro-intestinal:	Constipation (acute and chronic), Diarrhoea (acute and chronic), Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Bloating and Distension, Flatulence, Excessive appetite, Loss of appetite, Obesity and weight gain, Weight loss and anorexia.
Uro-genital:	Painful urination, Cystitis (acute and chronic), Incontinence and stress incontinence, Dribbling, Hesitancy, Candida or thrush
Addictions:	Cessation of smoking, Appetite control

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION VIEWPOINT ON ACUPUNCTURE

The WHO actually recognizes that acupuncture is effective in treating some 100 western biomedical conditions. Readers are reminded that this list is not definitive, nor should they expect that acupuncture would always be effective in treating these conditions. Western medical diagnosis is undoubtedly valuable, but the diagnosis and terminology does not always lend itself to the Chinese model. On occasions prospective patients may phone the clinic with a relatively obscure diagnosis given by their doctor or consultant. They may be subsequently deterred from acupuncture treatment when a definitive response is not given. It is important to remember that whilst acupuncture most definitely addresses symptoms and specific diseases as defined by the western model, it does so by treating the whole person. Whilst the manifestation of a so-called disease will change, the patient will also encounter improvement in overall health and functioning. In some instances there may find cure and in others, symptoms may be reduced to a level where a patient will be able to manage their condition more affectively and live their lives more fully. In some cases, whilst a patient might reduce the frequency of their attendance, their condition and or their illness, may need regular and long-term treatment. Alternatively they may find it beneficial to return to the clinic for a further course of treatment, should symptoms begin to reoccur or manifest in different ways.

Abstract: *A World Health Organization interregional seminar on acupuncture, moxibustion and acupuncture anesthesia was held in Beijing (Peking) in June 1979, attended by participants from twelve countries. Its purpose was to discuss ways in which priorities and standards could be determined in the acupuncture areas of clinical work, research, training, and technology transfer. Scientific investigation must be closely correlated with demonstrations of acupuncture's clinical efficacy. Apart from acupuncture analgesia used in major surgical procedures, acupuncture also has been applied as a diagnostic aid and in conjunction with fluoroscopy in gastrointestinal diseases. Acupuncture is clearly not a panacea for all ills; but the sheer weight of evidence demands that acupuncture must be taken seriously as a clinical procedure of considerable value.*

During the past decade, there has been a growing convergence between the most advanced research knowledge from physiology, biochemistry and pharmacology, and knowledge obtained by research in the field of acupuncture; that is to say, a convergence of modern international science with traditional Chinese medicine. For example, in more than 600 cases of coronary heart disease, the effectiveness of acupuncture in relieving the symptoms was over 80 percent. In 645 cases of acute bacillary dysentery, 90 percent of the patients were cured within ten days as judged by clinical symptoms and signs and the results of stool culture. The technique is also comparatively effective in controlling fever, inflammation and pain.

From the viewpoint of modern medicine, the principle action of acupuncture (and of moxibustion) is to regulate the function of the human body and to increase its resistance by enhancing the immune system and the antiphlogistic, analgesic, antispastic, antishock and antiparalytic abilities of the body.

The World Health Organization Interregional Seminar drew up the following provisional list of diseases that lend themselves to acupuncture treatment. The list is based on clinical experience, and not necessarily on controlled clinical research: furthermore, the inclusion of specific diseases are not meant to indicate the extent of acupuncture's efficacy in treating them.

Conditions treated by acupuncture according the WHO

<p><i>Upper Respiratory Tract</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute sinusitis • Acute rhinitis • Common Cold • Acute tonsillitis 	<p><i>Respiratory System</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute bronchitis • Bronchial asthma (most effective in children and in patients without complicating diseases)
<p><i>Disorders of the Eye</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute conjunctivitis • Central retinitis • Myopia (in children) • Cataract (without complications) 	<p><i>Disorders of the Mouth</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toothache, post-extraction pain • Gingivitis • Acute and chronic pharyngitis
<p><i>Gastro-intestinal Disorders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spasms of esophagus and cardia • Hiccough • Gastroptosis • Acute and chronic gastritis • Gastric hyperacidity • Chronic duodenal ulcer (pain relief) • Acute duodenal ulcer (without complications) • Acute and chronic colitis • Acute bacillary dysentery • Constipation • Diarrhea • Paralytic ileus 	<p><i>Neurological and Musculo-skeletal Disorders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headache and migraine • Trigeminal neuralgia • Facial palsy (early stage, i.e., within three to six months) • Pareses following a stroke • Peripheral neuropathies • Sequelae of poliomyelitis (early stage, i.e., within six months) • Meniere's disease • Neurogenic bladder dysfunction • Nocturnal enuresis • Intercostal neuralgia • Cervicobrachial syndrome • "Frozen shoulder," "tennis elbow" • Sciatica • Low back pain • Osteoarthritis

Men and women.

Although men and women share common problems and are diagnosed using the same processes and principles, there are obvious differences in anatomy and physiology and certain pathologies. This means that in addition to the standard process of enquiry, both men and women are asked questions relating to their own conditions, bodies and function. Their acupuncture and herbal treatment is prescribed accordingly.

Women:

In my own clinical experience I have found that the TCM model has provided us with an invaluable tool in making sense of range of gynaecological and obstetric problems. Similarly, both acupuncture and herbal medicine have proved more than useful in treating disharmony in women's functioning, from the onset of their menstruation (menarche) to the advent and harmonious completion of menopause.

Regulating menstruation:

Whether or not women attend my clinic specifically for gynaecological problems, they invariably report improvements to regularity, length and experience of menstruation and their cycles. When treatment is specifically focussed on a given gynaecological or obstetric pattern, then very profound changes can be obtained. Women who are experiencing an irregular menstrual cycle frequently find that their periods come at more regular intervals after a few months of treatment. Similarly shortened cycles appear to lengthen, whilst delayed ones are shortened and normal cycles can be established where previously they have been absent. In addition women report that both the emotional and physical symptoms of Premenstrual Tension/Syndrome either become easier to manage or go completely. The adverse symptoms of the periods themselves also improve; from reduction or cessation of pain to the harmonious flow of normal blood that subsequently is contained within a normal and healthy time span.

Easing the Change:

Women also attend my clinic for support during menopause, seeking resolution from symptoms such as hot flushes, night sweating, insomnia, palpitations, loss of libido, headaches, depression, irritability and mood swings. I have also noted that those women who have been attending the clinic for long-term treatment and maintenance, seemingly enter and pass through their menopause with comparative ease. Acupuncture is definitely affective in supporting this significant transition, and Chinese herbal medicine can offer a more sustained opportunity to address the deficiencies that often underlie the associated symptoms.

Whilst it is quite rare for women to seek treatment in the first instance for these conditions, both acupuncture and Chinese medicine can exert a very profound influence on conditions such as vaginal thrush (*Candida albicans*), excessive vaginal discharge and cystitis. In acute patterns such as cystitis, many of my patients have reported some, even significant amelioration of symptoms even within a given acupuncture session. Similarly the acute soreness and itching associated with thrush, can and often reduced soon after treatment. More chronic conditions, whilst responsive to acupuncture will obviously taken longer to resolve, and will require treatment that addresses the underlying disharmony.

Infertility, pregnancy, pre-birth, birth and post-natal treatment.

Infertility:

Many women are now using acupuncture to increase their chances of conceiving naturally and also to support the process of IVF treatment. Acupuncturists with training in this area are now working within the health service or on a private basis either in specialist clinics or in general practice. Whilst not all women experience success, evidence is accruing to show that this route is well worth considering.

Pregnancy and Pre-birth Acupuncture:

Similarly acupuncture is also proving effective in managing a range of problems associated with pregnancy; from morning sickness to breech presentation. An

increasing number of women are opting for what is termed “Pre-birth Acupuncture”, which is undertaken in the latter weeks of pregnancy. This protocol has been shown to reduce the length of labour in first pregnancies and reduce the frequency of complications. In addition women are now selecting acupuncture as a means of induction and in managing the complications of difficult labour. Acupuncture can be used as an alternative to conventional pain relieving techniques or as a means of limiting their use. It can also be utilised during labour to support failing contractions, and assist in dilation of the cervix when normal process are occurring naturally.

It is also worth mentioning the value of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine in support of post-natal health. Pregnancy and childbirth are extremely taxing on a woman’s constitution and subsequent health. In addition, the ever-increasing expectations that both society and women impose on themselves, to achieve over and beyond the role of recent motherhood, mean that they frequently struggle unnecessarily after childbirth. According to Chinese medical theory, if not managed appropriately then these conditions will have significant influence on future health. With appropriate treatment many of the illnesses and difficulties that they encounter after childbirth can be alleviated and further complications in turn, be prevented.

It is probably fair to say that women in general are perhaps more prone to fluctuations in their libido than men and this in turn is likely to be the product of fluctuating hormones within their menstrual cycles. This is a normal and appropriate pattern. However both men and women are subject to changes in their sex drive and functioning during illness and as a product of general physical and emotional disharmony. This may or may not be considered a problem, but it should be noted that Chinese medicine has a very unique way of ascertaining the underlying causes of sexual problems and can offer a valuable route for their resolution.

A full range of gynaecological and obstetric treatments is offered at the clinic.

Men:

Sadly men are a little more reticent to explore acupuncture and Chinese medicine and this probably reflects their reservation to pay attention to their health in the same way that women do and possibly a reluctance to visit medical practitioners in general. I sometimes find that men are often more sceptical about alternatives and often mistake them as being unsound and without scientific basis. This is a great shame, because appropriate diagnosis and treatment with acupuncture and TCM can frequently offer a means of addressing the problems they encounter and prevent more debilitating illness.

The discussion below then is designed to inform men of the patterns and conditions that can be treated by these means and thereby provide very real alternatives to drug based therapies that frequently serve to further deplete the underlying deficiencies that have given rise to them.

Men like women are also subject to urinary dysfunction. They may encounter urinary retention, incontinence, dribbling, hesitancy, frequency and nocturia, which may in turn be the product of internal deficiency or disharmony, the influence of Pathogenic Factors and or, the possibility of infection. In later life these problems can arise through dysfunction of the prostate gland. TCM offers well-defined models for understanding the causes of these problems and equally viable strategies for resolving them. There is no sure evidence to suggest that it can cure prostatic cancer, but in my experience, it can serve to alleviate some of the symptoms.

Men are also much more reluctant to discuss sexual health, let alone dysfunction. This is probably the result of living in a culture where sexual prowess is considered tantamount to male success and self-esteem, and seeming failure in this area results in feelings of inadequacy. Indeed, treatment can also address the emotional difficulties and anxiety that may be the product of difficulty or, exacerbate it.

The functioning of the reproductive organs are, like any other system in the body, in that they are subject to depletion, obstruction, ill health and emotional influence. Men

as well as women can and do experience a loss of libido that may be the product of emotional disharmony, stress and tiredness, but also according to Chinese medicine, deficiency of Kidney, Spleen, Heart or Lungs, as well as obstruction of Qi and other Pathogenic Factors. Erectile dysfunction and premature ejaculation can also arise from these patterns. Acupuncture and herbal medicine can be used to address these underlying conditions and so in turn see the return of normal healthy desire and sexual interest. Similarly normal and sustained erectile function can be returned and improvements in ejaculatory function can be achieved. It should be stressed that results are dependent the severity of an underlying pattern or deficiency, with relatively recent events succumbing more readily than long-term ones. If there is a significant mental-emotional component to these problems, then it may also be prudent to address these issues on this level also.

Children:

Many people are surprised to hear that acupuncture can be used with children and yet it can provide an invaluable means of addressing a wide range of childhood diseases. Frequently the results can be very dramatic with alleviation of symptoms occurring as rapidly as they very often occur. The techniques utilised with children are somewhat different from those applied to adults; the needle themselves are of a very fine gauge and rarely are they retained. Similarly, the number of needles used will be less than in adult acupuncture and in the hands of a skilled practitioner, can be undertaken without unnecessary trauma. Often acupuncture treatment is combined with massage (Tui Na) and parents can be taught simple techniques to help them continue treatment after consultation.

Paediatric acupuncture is in fact a specialism within the profession and in complicated and difficult cases, I will make the appropriate referrals. However, I have learnt like many acupuncturists because of need and circumstance. All of my own children received acupuncture at some point in their childhood and I feel very sure that their health and wellbeing was secured because of it. They continue to seek treatment when and if they feel a need and use me as they would their own doctors; probably more frequently in fact.

Acupuncture and mental and emotional health:

I have frequently been asked the question on whether “acupuncture can be used for physical problems as well as emotional ones”. I’m not quite sure exactly why the question is asked, but I assume that people are under the assumption that acupuncture might only be effective in less substantial problems and therefore in more ethereal and in turn emotional conditions. Or conversely, only effective in conditions that are the product of emotion, so called ‘psycho-somatic’ illness. In fact TCM convention does in deed recognise that the mind plays a very significant part in causing disease; so termed, ‘Internal Causes’ of disease. However, it also recognises that any ailment will have psychological implications/manifestations and that disharmony within the Zang fu themselves, will manifest in either preponderance of a given emotion or indeed, even in some instances, be the root of mental-emotional problems. In any given consultation a TCM practitioner will invariably ask questions about a person’s emotional wellbeing and in turn derive significant information that will form a very real part of a diagnosis. Similarly they will in turn also be interested in whether positive responses in mental-emotional health has occur after treatment, and will incorporate this information in devising subsequent treatment protocols. In my clinic I also find that whilst a person might initially come for a physical ailment, the positive repercussions of acupuncture on their mental wellbeing, lead them to subsequently share more and seek treatment on this level as well. Often patients will find themselves experiencing a calm and wellbeing that they thought they might never achieve through natural means; they are reminded of a state that perhaps had become a distant memory.

I have worked now for many years helping people manage mental-emotional as well as physical problems and whilst I have seen successes in a range of mental-emotional patterns, I find that more favourable results are achieved with depression and anxiety related disorders. In addition, patients frequently find relief or resolution from preponderances of given emotions that may be the cause of or a component of their illness. These preponderances might include, anger as well as resentment and frustration, helplessness, sadness and grief, fearfulness and anxiety. Indeed the seeming resolution and disempowering of these emotions serves to assist patients in resolving others issues that are prominent in the lives and lifestyles.

Whilst practical measures might be suggested and time given to help people understand the causes (aetiology) and the route through them, prospective patients need be assured however, that they will not be embarking upon a Freudian or post Freudian style of psycho-therapy. The aim will be to explore the core mechanisms rather than indulge in the manifestation. Thus sometimes it will be relevant to address a problem at a mental-emotional level and explore how mental-emotional patterns give rise to suffering both on this level, and in causing physical disease.

I have not worked a great deal with people suffering with psychotic illness and whilst I have seen some significant and positive changes in people with these conditions, I feel that the results are more transitory and I suggest that these conditions may need both frequent and long-term treatment. Sadly, many patients suffering from psychotic and schizophrenic illness are unable to sustain a normal and productive working life and their capacity therefore to commit to and maintain payment for treatment is undermined. However TCM is used in the treatment of these conditions in China and it may take time before conditions allow appropriate treatment in this country. The reader may wish to explore the following link regarding the use of acupuncture in the treatment of schizophrenia they might act as a starting point for further investigation.

Abstract

Acupuncture - Acupuncture has been used to treat mental health disorders, including schizophrenia, for more than 2000 years. However, in an analysis by the Cochrane Review (the leading medical review publisher) in early 2006 it was determined that there is:

"insufficient evidence to recommend the use of acupuncture for people with schizophrenia. The numbers of participants and the blinding of acupuncture were both inadequate, and more comprehensive and better designed studies are needed to determine the effects of acupuncture for schizophrenia."

www.cochrane.org/reviews/en/topics/90.html

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