

Acupuncture and Depression

A new approach for relief

Depression is a mood disorder characterized by both physical and psychological symptoms that can be detrimental to one's normal daily functioning. Depressed individuals often suffer from poor sleeping habits, crying spells, anxiety, worry, poor memory, inability to concentrate, body aches, stomach disturbances and a lack of interest in activities previously enjoyed. In extreme cases, individuals become helpless and hopeless about their lives and suicide is often considered. Modern medicine typically treats depression with a form of psychotherapy and/or anti-depressant drugs regardless of the specific symptoms presented by the depressed patient.

In contrast Chinese traditional medicine (TCM) does not recognize depression as a particular illness per se, but it aims to treat the specific symptoms that are unique to the individual using a variety of techniques such as acupuncture, Chinese Herbs, Tui-Na massage, and energetic exercises to restore imbalances found in the body.

Based on holistic approach, acupuncture consists of fine needles inserted along various points in the body, with the purpose of stimulating the body's flow of energy and functionality, known as Qi. Though acupuncture has been traditionally taught as a preventive form of health care, it has also been proven effective in the treatment of pain and chronic conditions. Conditions
Acupuncture Can Treat.

Since early nineties, studies around the globe have suggested that treating depression with acupuncture has a positive and holistic effect on depressed patients, particularly when used in combination with psychotherapy and herbal treatments.

Psychologist John Allen, from the University of Arizona in Tucson , and Acupuncturist Rosa Schnyer, conducted the very first pilot controlled study on treating depression symptoms with acupuncture in the western scientific world. In a double blind randomized study, 34 depressed female patients who met the DSM-IV diagnostic criteria were assigned to one of three treatment groups for eight weeks.

The first group received acupuncture treatment specifically tailored to their depression symptoms. The second group received a general acupuncture treatment not specific to depression, and the third group was placed on a waiting list for acupuncture but received no treatment. The study found that those in the tailored acupuncture treatment experienced a significant reduction in symptoms, compared to those in the non-specific treatment. Moreover, over 50% of the participants no longer met the DSM-IV diagnostic criteria for depression after the study.

The study findings suggest that using acupuncture alone could be as effective as other types of treatments for relieving depression symptoms typically used in Western medicine, such as psychotherapy and drugs. While these results are promising and the United Nations World Health Organization had approved acupuncture as a treatment for depression, further clinical trials

with larger samples are deemed necessary to endorse this new hope for relief.