

ACUPUNCTURE – Where’s the Evidence?

By Stephen Janz BAC BN MPH Director Kenmore Centre for Health

I am often asked the question ‘what can acupuncture help?’ quickly followed by ‘but how does it work?’ Many people seem to accept that acupuncture helps if you put it into a sore spot like a tight muscle, but can’t see how inserting an acupuncture needle into one part of the body can have a health benefit somewhere else. While there is a growing body of research into the mechanism of acupuncture, ultimately the mechanism of acupuncture is yet to be fully revealed from a modern biomedical perspective (we do understand it though from a Chinese medical perspective). What is more important of course is not how acupuncture works (though this research is very interesting) but what it can help. While a lot of research is continuing to be done there is already a large body of evidence as to the efficacy of acupuncture. In 2003 the World Health Organization (WHO) conducted a review and analysis of controlled clinical trials with acupuncture with the goal of “...strengthening and promoting the appropriate use of acupuncture in health care systems throughout the world.”

WHO found acupuncture effective not only for musculo-skeletal and painful conditions, but also for a diverse range of disorders including low blood pressure, turning a breech baby, morning sickness, period pain, insomnia, bell’s palsy, hayfever and many more. WHO’s extensive report listing over 80 conditions is available at: <http://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/en/d/Js4926e/6.html>.

The other common question is “is acupuncture’s effectiveness just placebo effect? “ The placebo effect is where a condition improves because the patient thought they were having an effective treatment rather than because of the specific effects of the treatment. My common response is that acupuncture works even better on domestic pets such as dogs than it does for humans, and there are a number of vets who practice acupuncture because of this. Fortunately research has also looked into the issue of acupuncture and placebo. A 2012 meta-analysis on chronic pain reported in the *Annals of Internal*

Medicine found that acupuncture was superior to both placebo and usual care.

Research continues to accumulate to reassure the community that in well trained hands acupuncture has a role in many conditions. In Australia we are fortunate that acupuncture is taught at university degree level and since July 2012 has become a registered profession. Of course all of the clinic’s acupuncturists are registered with the Australia Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and are happy to have a brief chat if you are unsure if acupuncture is right for you.

Close the Window and Avoid a Cold

The old wives tale of avoiding a chill to avoid a cold is a basic understanding in the Chinese medical model of immunity. In Chinese Medicine it is understood that some people cannot adapt well to environmental changes making them vulnerable to the viruses that are always in the air. So close that bedroom window in winter and don’t walk on cold floors with bare feet. Wearing a scarf on a cold or windy day also helps. Interestingly current research looks like supporting our understanding of the immune suppression effect of cold on the body, and it looks like this is just one more nugget of traditional knowledge which is being validated by modern research. What else can you do to avoid a cold? Zinc and Vitamin C activate the body’s Natural Killer cells which aid in immunity and these supplements are often recommended as part of an immune support program. The clinic provides a range of options for prevention, management and recuperation from winter illness. We provide naturopathic treatment, acupuncture, cupping and Chinese herbs. **Our Cold & Flu Kit is also available.** The kit comprises three easy to take common Chinese herbal formulae. When kept on hand these can be commenced at the first sign of a cold and often tips the immune balance at the early stage of a cold in the bodies favor. Suitable for adults and children.

The Clinic provides specialised treatment for:

- Back & Neck Pain
- Insomnia & Stress
- Symptoms of allergies
- Poor Immunity
- Sinus & Hayfever
- Glandular fever
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)
- Plantar fasciitis (heel spur)
- Trochanter bursitis
- Achilles’ Tendonitis
- Fertility
- Pregnancy care
- Detox
- Weight management



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- Osteoarthritis
- Bakers Cysts
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- Anti-inflammatory herbs
- Recipes
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Plantar fasciitis
- Trochanter bursitis
- and much more ...

Gift Vouchers Available

Vouchers can be purchased for Massage, Acupuncture, Naturopathy or products.



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What's New at Kenmore Centre for Health?

It was great to welcome Ruth back to our naturopathic team, and Karen to the massage therapy team following their maternity leave. Ruth and Karen are enjoying getting back into the swing of things at the clinic and continuing their passion for helping people with their health and wellbeing.

Stephen is back from the Rothenburg TCM Kongress in Germany. This Congress has run for the last 44 years and attracts over a thousand acupuncturists and Chinese herbalsists, primarily from Europe. This year the conference theme was mental and emotional disorders as well as geriatrics. The conference brought together some of the best expertise in this area from the TCM community through extended clinical workshops. Stephen has brought back to share with the rest of the Chinese medicine team fresh insights into the treatment of fear and anxiety and emotional disorders with acupuncture, as well as a novel approach to the treatment of stubborn painful conditions based on the Ba Gua, a very ancient understanding of the mechanism of acupuncture.

Research Snapshots

• Acupuncture Effective for Chronic Pain

A recent (September 2012) meta-analysis reported in *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that Acupuncture is superior to both sham acupuncture and standard care for the treatment of different types of chronic pain, suggesting that the effects of acupuncture are more than just placebo effect. The analysis found that about 50% of patients who received acupuncture had improvement in pain compared with 30% who didn't, and 42.5% who had sham acupuncture. According to the lead study author Andrew J. Vickers this study also showed that the best results with acupuncture followed "if the right needles were put in the right points to the right depth".

• Laser Acupuncture Effective for Depression

An Australian study reported in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* (June 2013) found that twice weekly infra-red laser applied to 5 traditional acupuncture points for 4 weeks, followed by once a week treatment for another 4 weeks (total of 12 sessions) resulted in improvement in depression scores. This trial was compared to placebo treatment where an inactive laser was used on the control group. The results showed a clinically and statistically significant benefit from laser treatment compared to the placebo group.

The clinic uses infra-red laser and is able to offer this treatment for those who would prefer a needle-free treatment.



• Cinnamon Lowers Blood Sugar Levels in Type 2 Diabetes

Rou Gui (Cinnamon bark) is a traditional herb used in Chinese medicine to treat a range of symptoms including aversion to cold, cold limbs, digestive upsets including diarrhea, fatigue, weak back and frequent urination. Cinnamon is also traditionally used in Chinese medicine to



treat type 2 diabetes. Recent research has found that the specific type of cinnamon used in Chinese medicine (cassia cinnamon) has a significant effect on glycemic (blood sugar) control and can benefit type 2 diabetes. The researchers caution that culinary cinnamon should not

be used as it contains little cassia cinnamon (even though it looks similar). Source: *Medscape*.

We use cassia cinnamon in the clinic as a single Chinese herb (Rou Gui 肉桂) as well as in combination with other nutrients such as chromium which also help blood sugar. Keeping blood sugar levels in a healthy range is critical to minimizing the complications from type 2 diabetes and this new research gives one more reason to consider (cassia) cinnamon as part of a treatment plan.

Improve Your Sinus and Hayfever: What to Eat to Avoid Inflammation

Allergies can be very troubling and we offer a range of options in the clinic to assist with allergies from acupuncture and Chinese herbs to specialized naturopathic immune techniques. There are also a range of things that you can do for yourself as well. It has been found that people in Greece have very few reported allergies. One reason for this may be their diet which is high in antioxidant foods as well as the omega 3 oils found in fish. These foods can have anti-inflammatory effects on the body. This anti-inflammatory effect can benefit sinus, hayfever and some other allergies. The other side effect is a boost in energy and wellbeing.

So, what foods can reduce and prevent inflammation?

Omega 3 fatty acids are found in fish such as wild salmon, cod, and sardines. Antioxidant foods include: tart cherries (also called sour cherries); avocado; beans; eggs; leafy greens (especially darker ones); broccoli (has a lot of vitamin C and calcium); asparagus; bean sprouts; tomatoes; berries; apples and pears; nuts, green tea. Also spices like ginger, basil and cayenne pepper. Turmeric is another spice often used in Thai and Indian food which contains curcumin. Curcumin actively reduces inflammation. In Chinese medicine turmeric is called Yu jin and also benefits the liver. Of course if you are sensitive to any of these foods it's best to avoid it. Try incorporating some of the above foods into your diet and look for a reduction in your allergy symptoms!

Our Practitioners: **Acupuncture & Chinese Medicine:** Stephen Janz, Ian Murray, Michelle Blum
Massage: Uli Graf, Karen McGrath, Teena Stefanovic, Monica Levine, Mary Stoddart
Naturopathy: Rachael Reed & Ruth Sladek

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