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NICKY SNAZELL'S

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Eye On The Needle

Most people have heard of acupuncture and understandably assume that if a treatment involves a needle, it must be acupuncture. This is akin to saying that everybody who uses a knife must be a surgeon. Our task is thus to look in depth at all the ways that needles are used, so that you have a better understanding of what the differences are and thus can eliminate the confusion surrounding this type of treatment. By doing so, it will also hopefully help you gain confidence to try this form of treatment in the future and help you seek out the best type of practitioner for your problem.



History

Historically, the use of the needle for treatment started in the east, most probably in China, many thousands of years ago. Thus, there have been thousands of years to refine and improve the understanding of acupuncture in Chinese Medicine, the latter being a complete medical system which looks at the whole body. It regards illness as the body being out of balance and thus seeks to identify why it is out of balance and then treats to redress this.

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Acupuncture was only discovered in the west relatively recently, the last 200 years or so, and slowly but surely became more understood and used.

Chinese Acupuncture is based on treating the flow of energy around the body and needles are generally inserted to a precise depth into the fascia in which the energy flows. Interestingly, our western technology now supports this theory (see page 5).

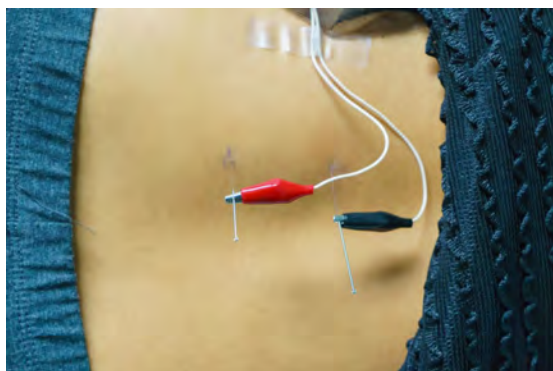
The Chinese also understood that some areas of the body were locally painful and would needle these independently, calling them 'Ah Shi' points, translating as 'that's it' points.

Acupuncture & Electro-Acupuncture

What Is Acupuncture?

Today's acupuncture uses very thin needles, much thinner than a hypodermic needle. These are inserted in the body at prescribed Chinese points which have a known therapeutic effect, or directly into an area of muscle spasm or pain. The needles are generally inserted and then left for anything up to 30 minutes.

Some therapists, depending on their source of training, will seek to intensify the treatment by rotating the needles or moving them up and down.



Electro-Acupuncture

Electro-acupuncture (EA) was originally developed for use as analgesia in surgery. However, the benefits of EA were soon recognised for the control and treatment of pain. Research is still ongoing to better understand the best settings to use and the technology is thus continuously evolving.

The equipment we use in house allows us to use specific frequencies to help eliminate both acute and chronic pain. It is understood that the use of different frequencies can stimulate the release of natural opioid pain killers in the body and that by using dual frequencies, both the intensity and longevity of the pain control can be varied.

A benefit of using needles with this type of electrical

signal is that the pain relief can be applied at deep levels, within the muscles that are causing the pain.

TENS

TENS is a form of electrotherapy which is applied through sticky pads which are placed on the skin. The advantages of this are obvious in that it is non invasive, is more easily applied and is more acceptable to those who have needle phobia. However, TENS does not offer the same depth of treatment advantages as electro-acupuncture. TENS tends to be limited to the treatment of pain at skin level, not deeper.

Analgesia By Acupuncture

Although EA was originally developed for use as an analgesic in surgery, results have not been consistent.

Perhaps more relevant is that acupuncture and EA are increasingly being used in the west to provide preparation for major surgery and in so doing are reducing the amount of chemical anaesthesia needed. This in turn reduces the risks of anaesthetics and improves recovery time.

In the USA, acupuncture is increasingly being used to put patients into a deep meditative state prior to



surgery, and the role of the chemical anaesthetic is only to maintain that state.

Acupuncture is also being used in some cases as the only form of anaesthesia in dentistry.

Western Acupuncture & GunnIMS

Western Acupuncture

Western acupuncture as taught today is a small subset of Chinese acupuncture, combining needling to local areas of pain or spasm, 'Ah Shi' points, sometimes called trigger points, plus some use of Chinese points, but without reference to Chinese theory.

Needles are used in the same way as Chinese medicine and the types of needle are the same. The focus in western acupuncture is to link the treatment to western medical principles, which requires 'evidence based' justification. This is discussed on page 4 in the 'Acupuncture in the NHS' section.

Chinese Medicine is a complete standalone medical system and is totally different to western medicine. By teaching and using Chinese acupuncture points, western acupuncture in effect has a foot in both camps.

Intra Muscular stimulation – GunnIMS



The majority of acupuncture needling is performed at relatively shallow depths in the body. As explained above, the needles are inserted and left static until removed. GunnIMS is completely different.

Professor Chan Gunn, a medically qualified Doctor, discovered GunnIMS by accident while carrying out tests in a laboratory in Vancouver, Canada. He found that patients were in pain, quite often long term, or chronic, pain, because of muscles being held in a painful contracture. He found that by inserting needles into these non-responding contracted muscles, those same muscles could be made to release and start behaving normally. To effectively release a muscle he found that multiple insertions were needed, using the needle more

as a microsurgical tool rather than as a static needle.

Eventually GunnIMS evolved to using an external device, called a plunger, which allowed the therapist to rapidly and easily retarget the needle to achieve the required result.

GunnIMS is fundamentally different to acupuncture and the results in treating muscle pain are far superior. It utilises western anatomical knowledge and makes no reference to Chinese Medicine. It generally requires much deeper needling and directly targets and micro surgically treats muscles in spasm. The training is thus totally different and only those practitioners trained through the Institute for the Study and Treatment of Pain (ISTOP), based in Vancouver, are qualified to provide GunnIMS. Nicky Snazell is one of only 3 practitioners in the UK to have reached the highest level of training and was awarded the first honorary membership of ISTOP in the world for her dedication to the use of GunnIMS.

A major strength of GunnIMS is that it is unsurpassed



Your results were negative, get lost

in diagnosing and treating muscle spasm. Both MRI and X-ray cannot 'see' muscle spasm, it is totally invisible to these scans. Thus many patients who may have been in long term pain and given a scan, only to be told 'nothing is wrong' will now understand why.

Dry Needling & Acupuncture In The NHS

Dry Needling



Dry needling refers to the use of a non-hypodermic needle.

Acupuncture needles are solid, they cannot inject a drug. Thus they provide a dry and not wet treatment.

Hypodermic needles, which are used to inject drugs, are relatively much

thicker and more painful to insert. This is perhaps why so many grow up with needle phobias.

It may at first seem that both acupuncture and dry needling are the same. After all, they are both dry techniques. But there the similarities end. Whereas acupuncture is a traditional method developed thousands of years ago, dry needling is relatively new, only having been adopted in the last few decades.

Traditional Chinese Acupuncture (TCM) and western acupuncture, both insert the needle at shallow depths, aimed at developing a stimulus into the fascia.

Dry needling is primarily used to treat tight muscles, or trigger points, to ease muscular pain. In some cases the needles are inserted and left for a number of minutes. In some cases the needles are moved up and down to increase the effect.

Dry needling is thus closer to GunnIMS than traditional acupuncture. However, GunnIMS specifies that only Medical Doctors and Physiotherapists in certain countries are qualified to be trained. It also requires intensive training and passing exams. Dry needling courses can involve little more than a weekends training.

Acupuncture and the NHS

Acupuncture is a treatment that has been and continues to be heavily debated by western medical practitioners. The views are widespread- some GP Practices and NHS hospitals have in the past openly used acupuncture, while others have not. One year, NICE, the organisation which determines approval for treatments and technology which may be used in the NHS, gives acupuncture a gold standard for treating conditions such as back pain. The next year acupuncture for treating back pain vanishes.

NICE guidelines are based upon an 'evidence based' model, which in simple terms means that there has to be sufficient evidence to support use. Thus the current position is that acupuncture lacks sufficient 'evidence based' data to support its use. How there could have been sufficient data the year before is confusing.

As a result, the current situation is that acupuncture is largely dismissed in the NHS and not easily available.



At last he had found the Regulatory Guidelines.

Acupuncture At Nicky Snazells

Fortunately, private clinics can determine their own treatment protocols. Based on the overwhelming evidence that we have seen in the past and every single day we are open, we are firm supporters of acupuncture, electro-acupuncture, GunnIMS and dry needling.



"Everyone who's unhappy with their health system is here."

Technology Supports Chinese Acupuncture

Chinese Medicine (TCM) has been developed over several thousand years, with no anatomical evidence to support it, as dissection of the body was prohibited. It is thus no surprise and completely justifiable that



western medicine advocates would have difficulty to understand or support its underlying theory.

In simple terms, TCM assumes that energy (called Chi) flows around the body in a network of fascia inside the body. This network is considered to have 12 major pathways, called meridians, which connects organs and extremities. The basis of TCM is that an illness is associated with an imbalance in the energy flow in one or more of these pathways and that treatment will improve and balance the energy flow in the meridian network.

Recognising the fundamental difference in the approaches of Western and Eastern medicine, China has sought better understanding of TCM, through the use of modern technology. One such study, called the Visible Chinese Human Project (VCH), revealed a pattern of line like structures that were remarkably consistent with the traditional meridian structure.



Further studies used latest computerised tomography and magnetic resonance imaging to create a 3 dimensional reconstruction of living human bodies. Together these studies indicated that the anatomy of the fascial network in the human body was conspicuously consistent with the traditional view of the meridian network pattern.

In layman's terms this is saying that our latest technology is supporting TCM assumptions. Perhaps most remarkable is that the Chinese developed this thousands of years ago without the benefit of our technology.



"This 'dark area' on the x-ray looks suspiciously like chocolate."

Ref: "Review of Evidence Suggesting The Fascia Network Could Be The Anatomical Basis For Acupoints And Meridians In The Human Body" 28 Feb 2011. Yu Bai et al. Evidence Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Volume 2011, Article ID 260510

Does Needling Hurt?

Our skin has a lot of nerves to sense touch, hot and cold, pressure and pain. However, once a needle has gone beyond the immediate outer layer, there are very few pain sensors.



A skilled practitioner understands this and will penetrate the skin very quickly, so that you would feel nothing more than a small prick. (no pun intended)

TCM will aim to penetrate to the layer of fascia where the patient gets a very definite sensation which is almost totally painless. Thus the majority of TCM therapists and those western therapists who use TCM points, will provide almost totally painless treatment.

The next level of needling is dry needling into tight muscles, or trigger points. This can cause a deep ache, usually short lived.



Again an experienced practitioner can use skills and technology to largely alleviate the pain response. Firstly, by using a therapeutic laser, which will generally penetrate up to 30mm into the body and greatly help to relax muscle spasm. In fact 'Laser puncture' refers to the use of a laser over TCM points, and can be helpful in treating patients without needles.

The second and more powerful technique to minimise a pain response is by first acupuncture specific points

which are known to minimise pain signals reaching the brain and others that will put the patient into a relaxed meditative state. This is no different to the same procedures used in China and now used in the USA for pain control in surgery.

A healthy, normal muscle has very limited ability to even realise a needle has penetrated it and in this situation a patient is unlikely to be aware at all. At times muscles will go into severe contracture. A very common example is low back pain / sciatica.

Laser Puncture

Therapeutic lasers, known as Low Level Laser Therapy (LLLT) have been available for many years and we have had multiple



lasers in our clinic since we opened. LLLT's are non surgical and differ from surgical lasers in that the beam is divergent rather than focused. This means that the laser beam penetrates the body as a cone, getting bigger and bigger as it penetrates. As it expands, it's strength diminishes and this limits the effective therapeutic depth to about 30cm maximum.

Lasers can be used at TCM acupuncture points and when used this way is referred to as Laser Puncture. This type of treatment is not something we tend to use at the clinic as needles are so much more effective. However, we regularly use laser treatment on tight muscles prior to needling, as it makes the treatment more comfortable.

There has been recent national press coverage of laser treatment for back pain. In our experience, it helps, but we would never rely solely on laser as we get much better results with needles.

How We Book Patients

At Nicky Snazell's Clinic, we strive to give you the best treatment experience possible, which means every part of your journey with us, from initial contact right through to saying goodbye, is as effective and as enjoyable as possible.

To achieve this we have to make sure we have booked you in on the right pathway for you. This will depend on your immediate problem and your treatment history with us.

If you have never been to our clinic before, we will aim to put you with the most appropriate therapist for your condition, allowing for factors such as your physical problem, your therapist preferences and also if you are wanting to claim on private medical insurance.

Once your therapist is sorted, we will book an assessment and possibly treatment, dependent on your wishes. Even if you have been assessed elsewhere, or if you think you know what your problem is, we will always assess you ourselves first, for both professional and ethical reasons.

After your initial assessment, you will probably need one or more treatments, with goals set and agreed, and interim reviews to check progress.

For returning patients with what appears to be a recurring problem, we will process this as a continuation of earlier treatment, if the last visit was no more than 6 weeks previous. We feel that beyond this timeframe, an assessment is needed to make sure that the problem is not something new. Such an assessment might be quite short, but will be needed to make sure we are giving you the quality of service you deserve.



For some patients it will be apparent that due to factors such as age, type of problem, or a particular injury severity, then it will be advised that ongoing maintenance would be a better quality of life option, than to wait until the problem reoccurs.

With the patients agreement, we will transfer them to a maintenance level, with the frequency of treatments adjusted to best suit the patient.

For realistic ongoing maintenance, a time limit of 3 months is allowed. Beyond this time a further visit would be considered a new condition.

A Note On Maintenance

A lot of our patients are recognising that it makes a lot more sense to maintain their health, rather than wait to break again. For those already on this pathway, they are gaining a more pain free life, allowing them to do things they couldn't have done before. Not only that, they are actually saving on treatment costs, as they are spending less on maintenance than they were getting fixed after they broke.

Another obvious advantage of booking in advance is that patients are getting appointment times that best suit them and that they can plan for in advance, rather than calling at the last minute to see what is available.

We constantly get patients who have broken at the wrong time, maybe just before an important family event, or a much looked forward to holiday, desperate to be mended in time. Some unfortunately miss out or have unenjoyable holidays.

Many of these problems would have been avoided if their mindset had been to maintain their bodies, rather than wait until it broke.

Would you plan an important holiday in a car that you hadn't had serviced? Probably not.

Why the difference with your body?

Jackie's Acupuncture Success

Jackie first started suffering with Trigeminal Neuralgia (TMJ), a chronic condition that carries pain from the face to the brain, 20 years ago and ever since then it's been an on and off problem. When she has been suffering, the pain has been excruciating.

"It was like lightning going off in my face. Toothache, earache, lightning all at once."

She was referred through her GP to a hospital, first told nothing was wrong with her and then diagnosed with TMJ and put on drugs, which she has now been taking for 15 years.

At times her pain was 10/10 and she found that the drugs only reduced it to 8/10 and thought that would be her only option for the rest of her life.

Earlier this year her pain became constantly unbearable following a routine dentist visit, which prompted further hospital visits. She was offered either an increase in drugs or nerve removal surgery, with no guarantee it would work.

At this point her daughter booked Jackie into our clinic and we prescribed acupuncture treatment. This took her pain down to zero.

"It's the only thing that settles it down. The best thing I ever did was come to Nicky Snazell's Clinic. I'm so grateful. The staff really listen to you there"

What Treatment Is Right For You? A Simplified Guide

For complex, chronic non-resolving spinal pain,
GunnIMS

For everything else, a combination of acupuncture,
electro-acupuncture and dry needling

Complementary Holistic Treatment



My name is Carol Bancroft and I am a fully trained and qualified massage therapist. I studied Massage Therapy at the Swedish Institute College of Health Sciences in New York City gaining an Associate Degree in Occupational Health Sciences

majoring in Massage and have been working as a complementary and holistic therapist since July of 2009 first in NYC and more recently back here in the UK since June 2011.

The Swedish Institute has one of the more comprehensive massage programs in the USA and the inclusive training included the study of Anatomy and Physiology, Myology, Assessment and Pathology amongst others. I am extensively trained in many forms of massage including Swedish - also known as relaxation- deep tissue, therapeutic and corrective massage, sports, prenatal - also known as pregnancy - massage, onsite/seated massage and Indian Head Massage as well as Shiatsu and reflexology. I am also trained in Polarity Therapy - to APP level as well as Reiki and am in the process of gaining certifications in crystal therapy as well as sound therapy.

- Deep Tissue Massage
- Sports Massage
- Swedish Massage
- Reflexology
- Reiki
- Sound Therapy

Contact Us

If you want to know more about the services we offer why not give us a call

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