

The Sports Doctor talks about acupuncture

By Dr. Robert Weil Nov 9, 2010 04:00:01PM



Dr. Jing Li, an M.D. of Chinese medicine, has practiced acupuncture and massage at Dr. Robert Weil's Aurora office for more than 10 years. Her experience covers 25 years. Courtesy of Dr. Robert Weil

Well, it's not really a secret, but acupuncture, the ancient art of healing, is still a mystery to many.

Acupuncture looks at the body as an energy system as compared to Western medicine, which looks at the body as a biochemical system (therefore drugs and surgery). Acupuncture is the procedure of inserting and manipulating needles into various points of the body to relieve pain or for therapeutic purposes.

Among the oldest healing practices in the world, acupuncture's focus is to restore and maintain health through the stimulation of specific points in the body.

In the U.S., where practitioners incorporate healing traditions from China, Japan, Korea and other countries, acupuncture is considered part of complementary and alternative medicine. Practiced in these countries, acupuncture is one of the key components of traditional Chinese medicine. In TCM the body is seen as a delicate balance of two opposing and inseparable forces: yin and yang. Health is achieved by maintaining the body in a balanced state; disease is due to an internal imbalance of yin and yang. This imbalance leads to blockage in the flow of Qi, (vital energy) along pathways known as meridians. Qi can be unblocked, according to TCM, by using acupuncture at certain points of the body that connect with these meridians. Sources vary on the number of meridians, with numbers ranging from 14 to 20. One commonly cited source describes

meridians as 14 main channels “connecting the body in a web like interconnecting matrix” of at least 2,000 acupuncture points.

Dr. Jing Li, a practitioner of Chinese medicine, has practiced acupuncture and massage at my Aurora office for more than 10 years. Her experience covers 25 years.

In my sports podiatry practice, she has treated all types of musculo-skeletal problems from arthritis to back pain, from chronic pain to persistent overuse sports injuries. Li mentions that properly administered, “not only is acupuncture not painful (I can attest to that, having had acupuncture for lower back, as well as sinus problems), but has virtually no side effects.”

She goes on to state that “in the overall world of physical therapy, treatment of sports injuries, and maintenance of optimum performance and wellness, acupuncture is certainly a smart option.” Acupuncture treats problems from high blood pressure, to diabetes, to respiratory problems. To learn more, check her website, jingsacupuncture.com. You can reach Li at 630-854-7084.

What about some e-mails:

John, Aurora — My daughter is a 13-year-old soccer player who’s had a history of shin splints. Rest and taping have been minimally helpful. She’s got flat feet like me.

Dr. Weil — Persistent shin pain is often foot mechanics related (so is persistent knee problems). Flat or pronated feet are common causes. Once stress fracture is ruled out, the combination of orthotics and strengthening is highly successful.

Gerry, Wheaton — What is your opinion about those fitness shoes that make all those “tone your legs and butt” claims.

Dr. Weil — Recent studies have shown not much if any truth to these claims. Some experts have called these shoes another fad. My take is — if you’ve got a history of foot, ankle, knee, or back problems, be careful with these shoes. I’ve had many patients who felt the rocker bottom shoes aggravated these areas. However, since these shoes do cause some imbalance, and instability, this can be good if used gradual under limited conditions. I’ve always liked instability training, using imbalance to get the body to use stabilizer muscles. I recommend including the shoes as part of one’s exercise program (like 15 to 20 minute of walking) if there are no problems with the shoes. Full-time use or pushing through joint discomfort is not recommended. Mostly, the claims are way overhyped.

Happy Turkey Day!

Dr. Robert Weil is a sports podiatrist from Naperville with an office in Aurora. You can hear him on his weekly radio show at 6:30 p.m. Thursdays on 90.9-FM. Contact him at drrweilsportsdoctor@yahoo.com and visit his website at sportsdoctorradio.com.