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Introduction

Complementary therapy offers a diverse approach to mainstream and conventional medicine. They comprise therapies that are not the main part of conventional medical care like acupuncture, homoeopathy and meditation. These therapies are used mostly alongside the conventional therapies. The chosen complementary theory is 'Acupuncture'. This theory is based on the belief that small distinct regions of the body like the face, foot, hand. The ear and scalp correspond to all parts and organs of the body. Previous researches have shown that stimulating these regions, especially with needles, may assist in dealing with the symptoms like stress, depression and anxiety (Complimentary Natural Healthcare Council, 2021). According to NHS, there are no statutory regulations of this therapy mainly in England (NHS.UK., 2021). In the UK, CNHC has taken an initiative to work with the Acupuncture Society who is dedicated to check all the details and insights of the training professionals and practitioners, their experience and insurance and ensure that they are registered with the CNHC registration. In the UK, an accredited acupuncturist can be found by assessing the website of the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (NHS.UK., 2021).

1. The History

Medical acupuncture has been successfully integrated into medical healthcare practices both in the hybrid and pure form in western countries including the UK. This technique has been derived from European and Asian sources and can be defined as the technique of the therapeutic insertions of fine needles in different patterns and combinations (Mayberry, 2018). The selection of the patterns and arrangement of the solid needles is based on the traditional principles like increasing the stream of qi (a delicate vivifying kind of energy) by means of characteristically defined channels of acupuncture, advanced concepts like drafting neuroanatomical events in segmental disseminations or an amalgamation of both the principles (Madsen et al., 2019).

These techniques used originally in China almost 2000 years ago. It arrived first in the West in the 17th century, the basic principles and philosophies the Chinese had used to elucidate its activities were in discrepancy with recent scientific researches and knowledge of the overall anatomy and physiology of the human body (Cloatre and Ramas, 2019). Hence, it was rejected by the medical professionals in the UK however, many of the healthcare professionals accepted and even practices it by adapting the main technique of using needles at the main points of the maximal tenderness for the treatment of the musculoskeletal pain. On the other hand, it was more accepted enthusiastically in Germany and France, where the original physician of the UK named Felix Mann became the acupuncturist in the 1950s. He then taught it to other medical

professionals and increased its culture by founding the Medical Acupuncture Society in 1959 and by arranging the usual meetings in London to spread awareness about its effectiveness. Since then, semi-annual scientific meetings continued (Ijaz and Boon, 2019). The society has major links with the highly professional acupuncturists all over the world and is a founding associate of the International Council of Medical Acupuncture and Related Techniques (ICMART) along with he also initiated 2 world congress meetings. Society has contributed to increasing the culture to treating pain with this technique followed by no side effects (Chan et al., 2017). The standardisation of the meridian nomenclature was published by the continued efforts of this society in 1990. Moreover, 'Acupuncture in Medicine, a scientific journal was also published in 1981 by this society. It also encouraged its members to teach different related courses to people at different levels and after proper training, they become eligible to become certified acupuncturist. With such efforts, the culture of acupuncture has increased in the UK (Ijaz and Boon, 2018).

2. The Uses and Efficacy

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) provides a proper guideline for the NHS on the use of care of patient and treatment through the use of acupuncture therapy. Presently, the NICE suggest that this complementary therapy can be used for the treatment of migraine and chronic headache due to stress, anxiety or depression (NICE.org.UK, 2020). However, it is used often for the treatment of many musculoskeletal pains and other related conditions which may include dental pain, joint pain, postoperative pain and chronic pain. Although, there is a need to do proper research and experiment to ensure the effectiveness of acupuncture as compared to the other treatments.

On the other hand, the World Health Organisation after approving it as an effective treatment through controlled trials recommends acupuncture for treating many of the diseases, signs and symptoms as shown below:

- Biliary colic
- Allergic rhinitis and hay fever
- Dysentery, acute bacillary
- Adverse reaction to chemotherapy or radiotherapy
- Depression following stroke
- Depression including depressive neurosis
- Neck pain
- Dysmenorrhoea
- Low back pain

- Acute epigastralgia in chronic or acute gastritis, gastrospasmp and peptic ulcer
- Nausea and vomiting
- Facial pain including craniomandibular disorders
- Leukopenia
- Sprain
- Morning sickness
- Induction of labour
- Headache
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Primary and essential hypertension,
- Dental pain
- Tennis elbow
- Stroke
- Renal colic
- Knee pain
- Postoperative pain
- Temporomandibular dysfunction
- Sciatica
- Periarthritis of shoulder
- Malposition of a fetus (Holistic-health.org.uk. 2021.).

3. Contraindications

The acupuncture therapy is generally safe without any major side effects if it is performed by any registered professional. However, in very few cases, it has been reported that the individuals have experienced short term, mild side effects. These side effects are as follows:

- Pain in the particular area of the skin where the needle is used for puncturing
- Bruising or bleeding on the specific area of the skin where puncturing is performed.
- Feel sick
- Feel faint or dizzy
- Drowsiness
- In very rare cases, deterioration of the already existing symptoms

To avoid such kind of risks, it has been recommended by the NHS.org.UK that the patients must discuss their present condition especially if they have bleeding-related disorders, taking any heavy medicine, antibiotics or anticoagulants and discuss complete medical history in detail with the general physician and seek advice before going for the acupuncture therapy. Moreover, this therapy must be avoided for people who have a metal allergy or have an infection in any regions of the skin where acupuncture is required to be performed. For the pregnant women, it is also safe however, they should tell and take advice from the family doctor before going for it and must also inform the acupuncturist about it so that he can remain cautious as some of the acupuncture points are needed to be avoided for the safety purpose of the pregnant women.

There are very few strict contraindications for acupuncture. It has even been used in vulnerable populations such as pregnant patients and pediatric patients. Nausea and vomiting in both populations appear to be more effectively ameliorated by acupuncture than in the general population. In general, acupuncture needles are thinner and therefore softer than conventional hollow-hole needles such as intravenous (IV) catheters, phlebotomy needles, or neuraxial needles. Anticoagulation is also not a strict contraindication based on this reasoning. Most physicians recommend not undergoing acupuncture if there is active infection, especially cutaneous malignancy, as there may be threat of neoplastic cell dissemination; and severe neutropenia secondary to the risk of infection. Otherwise, the practitioner's judgment is considered paramount.

According to Van Hal, M. and Green (2018), the two most specific contraindications of acupuncture that must be considered: patient with automated implantable cardioverter-defibrillator must avoid any kind of electromagnetic stimulation that might be used in the acupuncture, patients with a history of delusions or psychosis and individuals who are using anticoagulants like warfarin or history of bleeding.

4. Comparison to the Traditional Treatments

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a medical system that has been used by the Chinese for years. It is composed of different therapies which may include food therapy (use of energy and diet to restore the imbalance), herbal medicine, Tu-na (type of massage by targeting the pressure point for improving the Qi circulation) and acupuncture. This system is based on the Daoist ancient philosophy that the human body is an extension of the whole universe. The Qi or the life energy of the human body is believed under this philosophy to run by means of the channels known as meridians which control the balance of the human body. The other theory known as yin-yang gave

an idea of the opposing universal forces like dark and light, cold and hot which interact mutually to play their part in running the functions of the body in order. In TCM, the outbalance of yin-yang or Qi is supposed to be the cause of the disease, and the main diagnosis is focused on recognising the primary source of imbalance. It focuses on understanding the signs, symptoms, temperament, age, sex, environment in which the patient lives and activity he performs for the treatment instead of using western medicine.

Several studies have been performed to compare the traditional treatment method with acupuncture to identify the efficiency of this therapy. Abdelghani et al. (2013) conducted a study to compare the use of analgesic (muscle relaxing and anti-inflammatory drug) and acupuncture for the treatment of acute torticollis is one of the common diseases that cause severe discomfort hence, the person becomes unable to work temporarily. For this, they included 2 groups of 20 people suffering from acute torticollis. One group was treated with analgesic and another group was treated with acupuncture. Results of the study showed that acupuncture is a safe, effective and short treatment for people suffering from acute torticollis (Abdelghani et al., 2013). Similarly, Shetty et al. (2018) conducted a study for evaluating the efficacy of acupuncture for the treatment of Dysmenorrhea related pain (menstrual cramps) in patients who have experienced no pain relief after using oral contraceptives and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. For this, acupuncture therapy was given to such 15 patients. Results of the study showed that Dysmenorrhea related pain can be reduced or eliminated by acupuncture however, further study is required by increasing the number of participants to validate the results of the study.

Lee and Lim (2017) conducted a study on Parkinson's disease which is the 2nd most common neurodegenerative disease. For its treatment, the most commonly used drug is levodopa followed by certain side effects like loss of efficacy and other related complications (Surmeier et al., 2018). Hence, they performed a systematic review of the use of acupuncture for treating Parkinson's disease. Results of the study showed that acupuncture is widely used and effective for the treatment of Parkinson's disease without showing any adverse side effect (Lee and Lim, 2017). Another study conducted by Zhang et al. (2019) for evaluating the effectiveness of acupuncture for the treatment of Fibromyalgia. It is a disorder categorised by extensive musculoskeletal pain complemented by memory issues, sleep issue, fatigue, and mood issues (CDC.gov, 2021). The traditional treatment involves for include the use of milnacipran such as Savella and antidepressant duloxetine such as Cymbalta (Selvy et al., 2020). The side effects of using such drugs may include constipation, high blood pressure, excessive sweating, nausea, insomnia, dizziness, vomiting, palpitations and dry mouth (FDA, 2021). Results of the study conducted by

Zhang et al. (2019) showed that acupuncture can be used safely and effectively for the treatment of Fibromyalgia with no such side effects.

Hence, it has been identified that the use of acupuncture has been increased and also found to be effective in many different cases and used as an alternative to the traditional medical treatments without showing any side effect (Wu et al., 2018). Studies have also shown that acupuncture is safer and more effective as compared to the traditional medical treatment tradition for the treatment of the pain experienced after the dental surgery, post-operative vomiting and nausea, and different chronic pain conditions like lower back pain and headache, and some evidence is available that it may also be effective for the treatment of the psychological conditions like drug or cigarette addiction (Birch et al., 2021). The scientific reason could be that it targets the afferent nerve signalling which may influence the release of the endogenous opioids for promoting the relief of the pain followed by the augmented release of cortisol and adrenocorticotrophic hormone and by the downregulation of the signalling of pain fibres (Robinson et al., 2019).

5. Statutory Regulation and the Voluntary Self-Regulation System

The British Acupuncture Council (BAC) has taken initiative for showing its concern about the statutory regulation of TCM and herbal medicine. The BAC was created in 1995, it was one of the pioneer organisation which is accredited by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA). The PSA provided accreditation for the voluntary registration of individuals who work in different social care and health departments. For the accreditations, the organisation with voluntary registration are required to meet all their standards. Through this, assurance is provided that the organisation which is registered with the BAC is trustworthy and meet the high standards of care and technical competency (Acupuncture.org.uk, 2021). BAC is concerned that the statutory regulation of TCM and herbal medicine along with no statutory regulation for acupuncture may create misperception for patients and also the professionals. The BAC is contented that acupuncture is described as robust self-regulation, however, it wished that this therapy must also have a similar opportunity like other statutorily regulated providers hence, further work is going on it (Acupuncture.org.uk, 2021).

6. Ethical Considerations

Under the British Acupuncture Council, the acupuncturist is required to perform all of their activities under the code of ethics and regulations and rules of the society. If the acupuncturist is practising in the region regulated by London Local Authorities Act 1991 - section 4, an acupuncturist is required to be exempted from special treatment licencing to continue practice

(Acupuncturesociety.org.uk, 2018). They are required to keep appropriate records, follow standards and accurate assessment technique, must be certified, must be certified for the first aid course as well, and must recommend the patient to the doctor if the condition is out of his scope. Moreover, must have undertaken the CPD course hours yearly and must ensure to submit it to the society's log (Acupuncturesociety.org.uk, 2018).

7. Recommendations

It has been observed that acupuncture found to be an effective and safe way to treatments of different diseases, signs and symptoms and even it is successful for treating such diseases which don't have any specific or effective cure. Moreover, it is cost-effective and very cheaper than traditional medical treatments. Hence, it has been recommended that further researches must be conducted so that it can be used effectively for treating numerous diseases. For increasing its use, it is recommended that the government of the UK must spread awareness and provide specified regulations for its use so that people can choose this option without any doubt. Moreover, the government must ensure that all the people involved in providing this therapy are certified and registered so that the predictive issues would not be raised. It is recommended that the acupuncturists must follow the ethical guidelines, standards and rules and regulations of the country in which they are practising so that the issues can be minimised and any kind of negative outcome can be avoided.

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