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Introduction

This supporting paper will showcase and explore the findings of Acupuncture, discussing and evaluating its efficacy and uses as a complementary therapy instead of traditional medical methods.

Acupuncture is a western medical therapeutic modality involving the insertion of very fine needles (White, 2021).

The World Health Organization (2019) describes traditional Medicine as the entirety of various cultures' knowledge, skill, and practices used to treat and prevent illnesses and diagnose and maintain health.

Traditional and Natural Medicine, also known as alternative, energetic, naturalistic or complementary, is part of universal culture's wealth. It is the sum of knowledge, techniques, and well-founded practices in different cultures' theories, beliefs, and experiences used to maintain health and prevent, diagnose, improve, or treat physical or mental disorders (Garcia Milian et al., 2015). Traditional Chinese Medicine is, above all, a preventive medicine. It defends the logic that the best remedy against disaster is to avoid it, and the best cure for a disease is prevention (Collazo, 2009).

Acupuncture is never an alternative to the conventional medical system but is considered a complementary treatment to improve patients' quality of life (Amezaga Urruela and Suarez-Almazor, 2012).

History

Acupuncture is a prevalent practice within unconventional medical techniques. Originally from China, it is currently used in at least 78 countries.

Acupuncture is part of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the countries of the Far East, having spread for more than a century to the entire Western world. It is the oldest Medicine of all time. Primitive man was born and developed in China more than 3000 years before Christ, in the Huang-Ho Valley or Yellow River; in his first pain, he instinctively reached his hand to the painful area and tried to soothe it by massaging it; pressing it, thus constituting the first acupressure or rather acupressure manoeuvre, he used bamboo or fish thorns until the discovery of metals, using gold and silver needles (Lefevre, 2015).

Acupuncture needles were primarily made of bone, stone and metal, such as gold and silver (Garrido, 2019).

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved using sterile needles, which must be single-use to prevent infections and the transmission of illnesses (US Food and Drug Administration, 2020).

Lefevre (2015) describes in his thesis that traditional Chinese Acupuncture is based on the principles of Taoism, and the teachings of Confucius and the Ying and Yang are understood

to be opposite forces. The theory of the five movements classifies Nature and its phenomena as belonging to water, wood, fire, earth and metal. Under these principles, man is an entity between Heaven and Earth, and its health reflects the harmony resultant from its environment and inner world. In Acupuncture, this cosmovision determines the categorisation and systematisation of the acupunctural points, the vital energy or "Qi" and the meridians where it flows, the cause of illness, the role of internal organs and the diagnosis process.

Uses

According to the World Health Organization (2021), Acupuncture can be used for various afflictions such as migraines, general chronic pain, neuralgia, sciatica, paralysis (facial, hemiplegia), psychosexual dysfunctions (impotence), stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia, arthritis, anorexia, bulimia and skin conditions such as cystic acne, among many others.

The acupuncture technique contemplates several modalities of stimulation of the inserted needles, which can be manipulated manually (manual Acupuncture), electrical stimuli (electroacupuncture), heat (moxibustion), and pressure (acupressure) or laser energy to "realign the energies of the body or the Qi". Atrial therapy is also included, which is stimulation employing pressure or puncture of specific points in the auricle (He et al., 2017).

There is a growing demand for Acupuncture in hospitals and community clinics to recognise the experience transmitted from the East and scientific reports from the West. The application of Acupuncture contemplates a wide range of disorders whose most relevant manifestation is rebellious, chronic and recurrent pain (Garrido, 2019).

According to the research carried out by White, Cummings and Filshie (2018) Acupuncture produces the following documented effects:

- Analgesic effect: It can relieve or cancel any pain. Thus, everything from chronic headache to neuralgia can be successfully treated with acupuncture.
- Anti-inflammatory effect: Indicated in disorders of the musculoskeletal system such as a sprain or contracture. As it does not produce doping effects, acupuncture is being applied more and more frequently in the sports field.
- Sedative and relaxing effect: It is an effect related above all to the nervous system. It can be used on its own or as a medication enhancer. It is used to treat stress, anxiety, or other emotional disturbances. It is not only beneficial on a psychological level but has also been used successfully in neurological conditions.
- Regulatory effect of metabolism: Acupuncture can regulate metabolism, which is used to treat cases in which there is an excess of some substance in the blood, such as cholesterol. It is also useful for obesity problems.

Acupuncture also has an application in cases of drug addiction, in which it cleanses and eliminates toxic substances such as tobacco or alcohol and does not create new dependencies.

Efficacy

The effectiveness of a treatment is defined as the ability to achieve the desired effect. Acupuncture is a procedure that consumes few resources and is highly effective in the complementary treatment of chronic pain (Fuentealba and Biagini, 2016).

The anatomical structures and physiological functions of acupuncture points, according to Chinese Medicine and traditional Acupuncture, through the theory of meridians or channels, have not demonstrated equivalents in modern biomedical science. Still, modern neuroscience and clinical trials show high therapeutic potential in the treatment of chronic pain (Cobos Romana, 2013).

Although it is still unknown how Acupuncture works precisely, studies have shown that it acts on the nervous system stimulating the release of endorphins (analgesic substances) and the activity of cells of the immune system (Garrido, 2019).

Studies have found that Acupuncture can alter brain chemistry, affecting the release of neurotransmitters and hormones and altering the functions of the nervous system related to involuntary mechanisms of the body such as blood flow, blood pressure and immune reactions (Lopes-Júnior et al., 2016).

Acupuncture can sometimes work when traditional Medicine fails, such as with chronic diseases, pain control, and managing stress (Garrido, 2019).

In a systematic review that included 41 randomised controlled trials, significant evidence was found on the use of Acupuncture to control nausea and vomiting in cancer patients. This review sought to assess the effect of Acupuncture on other symptoms but concludes that more studies are needed to control biases to reach more accurate conclusions (Xia et al., 2017).

Previous studies have proven that properly indicated that the correct application of Acupuncture significantly improves patients' quality of life by optimising their sleep, reducing disability, and decreasing the intensity and frequency of pain by more than 50% (Collazo, 2009).

Acupuncture effectively controls pain and local swelling in the postoperative period shortens the resolution of the hematoma and swelling of the tissues and minimises the use of medications and their inherent side effects. It is also essential in treating nausea and vomiting, ubiquitous in chemotherapy treatment patients (Carlos Lopes-Júnior et al., 2016).

Moreover, side effects have been extensively studied; for example, a systematic review from the Cochrane Institute that included 26 studies with more than 3,000 patients demonstrated the superiority of acupuncture point stimulation for decreased nausea and vomiting, with a

better outcome than treatment with antiemetic medications for nausea management and equivalent for vomiting management (Cochrane Institute, 2014).

Contraindications

Acupuncture does not have collateral effects; no drug or medication is used in its application, thus avoiding said effects or the dependencies associated with medications. However, it should not be used in patients with pacemakers. During pregnancy, there are also contraindicated points; patients should inform the therapist about these conditions or a cosmetic implant. In pregnant women, do not puncture below the navel for any reason. These functions lead to abortion and are only used in very special cases (White, 2021).

Practitioners of Acupuncture should adhere to the known points or meridians, avoiding innovating or experimenting and never puncturing a swelling. The Chinese did not know the postulates of infection and external aggression, but they had experimented with negative results (Garcia Milian et al., 2015).

It is not advisable to treat patients who are exhausted from a long walk, fatigued from hard work, or had just taken a bath in very hot water.

Drunkenness, anger and intoxication make the puncture very dangerous, which, however, can be done in an emergency (imminent death) (Collazo, 2009).

Comparison to traditional treatments

Compared to traditional Medicine, allopathic diagnosis - from western Medicine - has precise knowledge of the physiology and biochemistry of the body. Allopathic observation involves chemical analysis of blood, urine, faeces, imaging or measurement techniques that offer completely objective information about quantities, levels, count and presence of hormones, compounds, particles, viruses, bacteria, fungi, masses, etc. These processes are objective because they study a measurable and verifiable level by anyone who has access to the analysis results. They are considered reliable because they eliminate possible human errors using increasingly advanced technology (World Health Organisation, 2011).

Acupuncture services are offered stating that it is a method of traditional Chinese medicine, although few mention the fact that it is a technique not proven by current medicine, since, despite the different scientific investigations that were carried out to determine if indeed the key points of this technique were truly incident on the organs and various parts of the body that are sought to be stimulated, no favourable results have been found to corroborate one of the fundamental elements of Acupuncture, such as the map of critical points of the body (Sánchez, 2015).

However, for example, according to a study conducted by He et al. (2017), 40% of cancer patients complained about chronic pain after undergoing anti-cancer treatments such as

chemotherapy; clinical studies showed Acupuncture was beneficial in these cases for the treatment of residual pain, thus improving the overall quality of life of patients.

Conclusion

Although acupuncture is a very popular technique, which has become consolidated in the West, it has different contradictions that are worth knowing before undergoing a body treatment of these characteristics.

The points in favour of this technique are varied, such as the fact that this same technique can be used to treat different ailments or health problems, such as respiratory diseases, muscle problems and even neurological problems such as migraines. The negative points of this technique are very varied, which is why it is advisable to know each of the dark points that Acupuncture contains (Sánchez, 2015).

The use of acupuncture as an auxiliary therapy for the management of chronic pain requires some necessary conditions. A basic diagnosis must be made before the start of therapy. In this way, the patient will benefit from effective Western treatments and, above all, will avoid delaying the diagnosis of a potentially serious condition, such as, for example, a vertebral metastasis in the lumbar spine or pain of coronary origin (Garrido, 2019).

If symptoms or warning signs appear during the course of the sessions (pertinacious pain, night pain, etc), patients should not hesitate to contact the doctor who referred the patient or request support from the corresponding specialist, since it could be a complication.

The patient must continue with the pharmacological treatment indicated by his treating physician. It often consists not only of medications, but also physical therapy, and psychological and/or psychiatric support (Ernst, 2019).

All these therapeutic modalities must be understood as coadjuvants in the healing process and not as a replacement for allopathic medicine (Garrido, 2019).

Traditional Chinese Medicine constitutes a source of extraordinary wealth for the ethical training of health professionals, not only because of the values that it is capable of strengthening but also because of the holistic vision that it has of human beings; it allows establishing a good medical relationship with the patient, maintaining respect and consideration at all times, includes natural methods of diagnosis and cure without risks, constituting preventive medicine par excellence. If these principles are not adequately generalised, medical problems can arise and difficulties in the quality of the medical care that is offered daily (Lunstroth, 2006).

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