

Acupuncture Research Update

"Keep your vitality. A life without health is like a river without water." - Maxime Lagace

Acupuncture Beats Intravenous Morphine for Acute Pain Relief



In 2016, the American Journal of Emergency Medicine published a study looking at the efficacy of acupuncture in managing acute pain for patients in the emergency room when compared to intravenous morphine. The researchers looked at 300 patients who presented to the emergency room with acute onset moderate to severe pain. Half of them were treated with acupuncture and half were given intravenous morphine. To measure their pain reduction, they asked patients to report their pain score before and after the treatments, and considered a reduction of 50 percent or greater to be a significant reduction.

The study showed the patients who received acupuncture treatments for their pain saw pain

reductions of 92 percent compared to 78 percent in the morphine group. The acupuncture also seemed to work more quickly than the morphine, lowering patients' pain scores in an average of 16 minutes compared to 28 minutes for the morphine group. Additionally, 89 patients who received morphine experienced minor adverse side effects while only four of the patients who received acupuncture did. Overall, this study showed acupuncture worked better and more quickly than intravenous morphine for reducing people's pain in a medical setting.

This study joins a growing body of literature suggesting acupuncture is very effective at reducing pain and/or changing how our bodies experience pain. The lack of adverse side effects associated with acupuncture treatments presents a strong argument for its use, especially as synthetic medications are associated with many negative side effects and people are often allergic to the medications.

Because acupuncture affects our brains, stimulating the release of natural pain-reducing hormones, it can be used for any number of afflictions that cause pain. Acupuncture stimulates the release of endorphins – neurotransmitters responsible for blocking the sensation of pain. The stimulation also releases other chemicals that either change how the body experiences pain or triggers the release of other chemicals that activate the body's internal regulating system. It is thought that acupoints are more densely packed with nerves than other points on the body, so stimulating these points sends more signals along the nerve networks in our body to cause this release of chemicals.

This process has a normalizing effect on nerves and hormones. By bringing the body into better biochemical balance, acupuncture promotes physical and emotional well-being and supports the body's natural healing abilities.

Acupuncture and TCM also address the root causes of pain rather than just masking the symptoms. We develop treatment plans that are unique to each patient because each patient comes in with a unique body, health history and root cause behind their pain. By addressing the root causes, we create more lasting healing and bring your body back to a place where it can function optimally, using its natural healing processes to help you stay well.

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