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Issues Impacting Women's Health

Everyone wants to be healthy in order to enjoy a sense of well-being and have the best quality of life possible. Oriental medicine has always addressed the special needs of women throughout their lives. Women are more susceptible than men to certain health conditions, which can make it more challenging to achieve optimal health. Fortunately, many health issues women face respond extremely well to acupuncture treatments.



Several conditions that impact women more frequently than men include:

Cardiovascular Disease: As the number one threat to women's health, cardiovascular disease is not just a man's disease. According to the American Heart Association, an estimated 44 million women in the U.S. are affected by cardiovascular diseases, causing 1 in 3 women's deaths each year. They also state that women have a higher lifetime risk of stroke than men, and 90 percent of women have one or more risk factors, with fewer women than men surviving their first heart attack. By integrating acupuncture and Oriental medicine into your heart-healthy lifestyle, you can reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease.

Depression: The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) states that women are twice as likely to experience depression as men, and one in eight will contend with major depression during their lifetime. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), depression is the most commonly reported mental health problem among women.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS): Four times as many women as men develop chronic fatigue syndrome.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS): Women are 2 to 6 times more likely to develop IBS. Acupuncture points can help relieve IBS symptoms, according to researchers from the University of York in the U.K., who found that integrating acupuncture into a treatment plan led to less severe symptoms.

Autoimmune Diseases: According to the American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association (AARDA), about 75 percent of autoimmune diseases occur in women. As a group, these diseases make up the fourth largest cause of health-related disability among American women.

Some specific autoimmune diseases that affect women disproportionately more than men include:

Multiple Sclerosis (MS): Nearly half a million Americans have multiple sclerosis, and of that group two-thirds are women. According to the American Academy of Neurology, women with MS are nearly 1.5 times more likely to carry the gene associated with the disease, and are more likely to transfer the gene to female offspring.

Lupus: Ninety percent of all lupus patients are female. Lupus has no known cause. Some scientists believe it may be hereditary and caused by a combination of factors, including hormones, stress, environmental toxins, sunlight, exposure to fluorescent light, and some medications.

Celiac Disease: An autoimmune disorder that affects the digestive system due to an adverse reaction to gluten, 60 to 70 percent of celiac disease patients are women.

From an acupuncture and Oriental medicine perspective, a health problem is never just in the body or in the mind. Whether an imbalance or disharmony began as a physiological or spiritual issue, ultimately, all aspects of the body are affected.

If you or someone you know are struggling with any of the issues discussed in this newsletter, or you would like to improve your quality of life, contact us today to see how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help!

Living Well with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

When we are unable to do our basic daily activities, we may need more rest. For those with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), rest doesn't help. Sufferers may feel tired for more than six months and experience reduced memory, insomnia or a wide range of other symptoms, including, but not limited to, headaches, flu-like symptoms and chronic pain. Contributing factors can include severe stress or trauma, a history of infection, and exposure to toxins.

From an acupuncture and Oriental medicine perspective, CFS reflects a disharmony. When we are out of balance, we may experience digestive upset, unclear thinking, habitual fatigue, muscle weakness or discomfort, and insufficient elimination. At the University of Hong Kong, researchers included acupuncture points in a protocol for patients diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome. Patients who received acupuncture experienced less physical and mental fatigue.

Oriental medicine can help relieve many of your symptoms because it is exceptional for relieving aches and pains, helping to avoid getting sick as often, recovering more quickly, and improving vitality and stamina.

Autoimmune Disease Support

Autoimmune diseases are a group of disorders in which the immune system attacks the body and destroys or alters tissues. There are more than 80 serious chronic illnesses in this category, including lupus, multiple sclerosis, celiac disease, and type 1 diabetes. Due to the complexity of treating autoimmune disorders, integrative medicine solutions have received much attention as successful therapies in their treatment. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine are specifically noted for use in pain relief, regulating the immune system, managing symptoms, and improving overall quality of life.

Multiple Sclerosis: A progressive disease wherein the immune system mistakenly attacks the protective wrapper on nerve cells, known as myelin. As the damage accumulates, the brain and body communicate less well. Individuals may experience symptoms that include a loss of coordination, muscle weakness, numbness and tingling, dizziness, blurred vision, and paralysis.

Although multiple sclerosis can involve an array of symptoms, it is possible that no two patients will share the same underlying pattern. In Oriental medicine, as a whole, patients with MS present either wind- or dampness-based symptoms. Symptoms with an underlying wind factor arise and abate suddenly, can be quite intense, and jump between different areas of the body. Symptoms with an underlying dampness factor cause swelling and bloating, lead to muscle weakness or a sense of heaviness, and can cause unclear thinking. Oriental medicine may help restore balance and reduce the frequency and severity of flare-ups.

Lupus: Lupus involves an overactive immune system that fights unnecessarily and can injure the skin, joints, organs (heart, kidneys, and lungs), and the brain. Symptoms may include red facial rashes, sore joints, upper abdominal pain when breathing deeply, severe chronic fatigue, memory problems, and scalp hair loss.

While every lupus patient may present symptoms differently, Oriental medicine views lupus as a reflection of toxic heat. Good health requires balanced yin and yang, which reflect cold and heat, respectively. While yin and yang both nourish and restrain each other, yang tends to multiply (or worsen) more quickly, whereas yin is slower to change. Having more estrogen than testosterone, women are more yin and vulnerable to yang conditions.

In a small study, researchers from the University of Pittsburgh found that by stimulating acupuncture points

along the spine and on the four limbs, patients with lupus experienced less pain. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help clear heat and nourish yin. Combined with exercise and reducing stress, these modalities can work double-duty towards improving your overall health and reducing the likelihood of a lupus outbreak.

Celiac Disease: In patients with celiac disease, the small intestine becomes damaged and cannot absorb nutrients efficiently. Celiac disease may also cause fatigue, bone disorders, fertility problems, and skin rashes.

Treatment of celiac disease typically revolves around symptom management and dietary changes. Any products known to contain gluten (bread, pasta, processed foods, vitamins, and even cosmetics) may trigger symptoms and should be avoided.

Call today to find out more about how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can be integrated into your wellness plan!

April Showers!

As spring begins to roll around so do allergies, aches and pains. So don't let the April showers dampen your mood and your health! Instead head over to Tai-Nan Wang Acupuncture to help you with an current or new physical problems with the beginning of spring. Whether we can assist with herbal supplements or acupuncture, if you feel like you need a little immune system spring cleaning give us a call today!

- A new study shows acupuncture may provide some allergy relief

Acupuncture already helps to relieve pain in some patients, and the latest study hints that it might relieve sneezing and itchy eyes as well.

Most patients plagued with sniffles brought on by seasonal allergies turn to antihistamines for relief, but when they don't get relief, some opt for alternative treatments like acupuncture, in which tiny needles inserted just under the skin at specific points in the body are used to reduce certain symptoms.

In a study published in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers examined 422 people who tested positive for pollen allergies and had allergic nasal symptoms such as a runny nose. The participants reported their symptoms as well as what medication and doses they used to treat them.

The researchers then divided them into three groups; one received 12 acupuncture treatments and took antihistamines as needed, a second group received 12 fake acupuncture treatments (needles placed at random, non-meaningful points in the body) and took antihistamines as needed, while the final group only took antihistamines for symptoms.

After two months, the researchers asked the patients about their symptoms and how much medication they used. The participants who received the real acupuncture treatments with their antihistamines showed a greater improvement in their allergy symptoms and less use of antihistamines compared to the other groups.

But the fact that even the participants receiving the sham acupuncture therapy reported some relief of their symptoms suggests that a strong placebo effect may be responsible for at least part of the improvement.

That possibility was supported by the fact that after four months of follow-up, the difference between the groups was less pronounced. The researchers speculate that the patients' expectations of how much the acupuncture might help them could have influenced their reports of improved symptoms.

But if the treatments are providing some type of relief, then acupuncture's potential role in treating allergies should be investigated further, the authors say. "The effectiveness of acupuncture for (seasonal allergies) compared with other antiallergic interventions and the possible underlying mechanisms of any effect, including context effects, need to be addressed in further research," they write in the study.

That view is supported by Dr. Remy Coeytaux of the Duke Clinical Research Institute and Dr. Jongbae of the Regional Center for Neurosensory Disorders and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who wrote an editorial accompanying the study.

They note that acupuncture's benefits have started to emerge over the last 15 years and enough high-quality clinical trials support "patient-level meta-analyses for several clinical indications." They suggest that more rigorous research, which would include comparing acupuncture with existing treatments for conditions such as allergies, should be conducted in coming years.

They write: "It may be time to begin asking such questions as: How does acupuncture compare directly with other therapeutic approaches? Which of the many acupuncture traditions or approaches is most effective or appropriate for a given clinical indication? What outcomes or process measures should we be assessing in clinical trials of acupuncture? Is the magnitude of effect, if any, associated with acupuncture for a given clinical indication 'worth it' from the perspective of patients, payers, or policymakers?"

In the meantime, study author Dr. Benno Brinkhaus of the Institute for Social Medicine, Epidemiology and Health Economics at Charit© University Medical Center in Berlin wrote in an e-mail response describing the study that "From my experience as a physician and acupuncturist, and as a researcher, I would recommend trying acupuncture if patients are not satisfied with the conventional anti-allergic medication or treatment or they suffer from more or less serious sides effects of the conventional medication. Also because acupuncture is a relative safe treatment."

We here at Tai-Nan Wang Acupuncture always strive to help you be at your health prime and we hope to hear from you soon!

Depression Sufferers Can Find Balance

Depression refers to severe and long-lasting 'down' times that impair regular activities.

Although caused by a variety of factors, a family history of depression and severe stress can increase the likelihood of the disease.

Qi (energy) enables the body to function in harmony. As women lose Qi during the menstrual cycle, pregnancy, and childbirth, it is more common for women to be Qi deficient than men.

Acupuncture treatments can correct these imbalances, support the immune system, and directly affect the way your body manages stress and your mental health.

Words can also move Qi, which explains why talk therapy can give patients a sense of physical relief from symptoms. A combination of talk therapy along with acupuncture and Oriental medicine may be even more helpful.

According to Beijing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, researchers have noted greater therapeutic benefits from the use of combined therapies than from the use of independent therapies.

Call today to find out more about how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can be integrated into your emotional wellness plan!



Irritable Bowel Syndrome Relief

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) involves alternating constipation and diarrhea. Individuals with IBS have a noticeable and sustained increase or decrease in frequency of elimination. Patients may experience pain during stool elimination, cramping, nausea, bloating, gas, headaches, and backaches.

While other patterns may be present, irritable bowel syndrome is generally considered a disharmony between the liver and spleen meridians. The liver meridian is responsible for the smooth flow of Qi throughout the body. This flow can be upset by emotions or stress, causing Qi stagnation.

The spleen meridian is associated with the function of digestion and transforming food into energy (Qi). It can be weakened by a number of factors, including overeating unhealthy foods, overwork, stress, fatigue, and lack of exercise. When the spleen meridian is weak and the liver meridian is not moving smoothly, the liver overacts on the spleen and can manifest as symptoms of IBS.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine support Qi flow throughout the body, ensuring that all physiological and emotional processes run smoothly.

Treatment focuses on alleviating symptoms and correcting any underlying imbalances through a variety of Oriental medicine techniques that may include acupuncture, stress management, dietary changes, and exercise.
