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# Acupuncture – Getting to the Point!

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The use of acupuncture is an increasingly popular mode of treatment for people and animals across the world. This ancient art of healing is actually more than 3,000 years old, but has only in the last few decades been recognized in the United States as a valid medical and veterinary treatment option. Acupuncture has the advantage over medications in that it has few to no side effects or adverse reactions, and often there is significant improvement after only one treatment. Acupuncture can be used to treat a wide variety of conditions and can be used in conjunction with surgery, medications or chiropractic.

## **I. Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Theory**

- a. Acupuncture is a branch of TCM. TCM theory teaches that life is created and nourished by a vital force called Qi (chi), which leaves the body after death.
- b. Qi has negative (Yin) and positive (Yang) components which must be in a state of balance for the body to be healthy.
- c. Qi travels in the body along pathways known as meridians. With disease states or imbalances due to injuries, there are blockages of the flow of Qi along these meridians.
- d. With acupuncture, we restore the flow of Qi by inserting needles or other stimulation at specific points along these meridians.

## **II. Acupuncture From a Scientific Perspective**

- a. How does acupuncture really work? We can look at acupuncture from a completely modern or scientific viewpoint as well. Many studies have been done documenting the neurophysiology behind acupuncture.
- b. Acupuncture points are areas of concentrated nerve bundles and vessels with the unique property of decreased electrical resistance. When a needle is placed into an acupuncture point, a stimulus is transmitted to the spinal cord via afferent peripheral nerve fibers. This then causes a negative feedback and blocks pain fibers. Acupuncture also works directly on the brain by causing an immediate release of endorphins.
- c. Acupuncture also enhances the immune system by raising the level of white blood cells, immunoglobulins and antibodies in the bloodstream.

## **III. Modes of treatment – how can we stimulate acupuncture points?**

- a. “Dry Needling” refers to the classic form of acupuncture, applying fine needles into the acupuncture points. These can be left in for varying amounts of time, or twisted for a different form of stimulus.
- b. “Electroacupuncture” refers to stimulating acupuncture needles with a small electric stimulator similar to a Tens unit used in people. We use this for most musculoskeletal cases.
- c. “Moxibustion” refers to stimulating the acupuncture needles by heating them with a burning herb called Moxa. Moxa can also be used without needles.
- d. “Aquapuncture” refers to the injection of a substance into the acupuncture points through fine hypodermic needles. Often Vitamin B12, saline or homeopathic mixtures are used.
- e. “Acupressure” is the application of manual pressure to the acupuncture points.

#### **IV. What types of conditions can we successfully treat with acupuncture in the dog, cat and horse?**

- a. Arthritis or hip dysplasia
- b. Back, neck or spinal problems
- c. Ataxia, paralysis or paresis
- d. Muscle atrophy
- e. Gastrointestinal disease (colic, diarrhea, etc.)
- f. Laminitis
- g. Behavioral problems
- h. Dermatologic (skin) disease
- i. Infertility
- j. Weight loss
- k. Seizures
- l. Immune system dysfunction
- m. Kidney or liver problems
- n. Aid in recovery from surgery
- o. Ophthalmic (eye) conditions
- p. Many other conditions

#### **V. The Meridians**

- a. There are 12 paired and 2 unpaired meridians (pathways for the flow of Qi).
- b. There are six Yin meridians: Lung, Spleen, Kidney, Pericardium, Heart, and Liver.
- c. They are paired with 6 Yang meridians: Large Intestine, Stomach, Small Intestine, Bladder, Triple Heater and Gallbladder.
- d. These meridians follow external pathways and also connect internally with their corresponding organs.
- e. Each pair also corresponds to an element found in nature and is prominent at certain times of the day or night.

#### **VI. Bladder Meridian**

- a. BL is one of the most important meridians both diagnostically and therapeutically. It begins at the eyes and continues down either side of the spine, all the way to the hind foot.
- b. All association points of the other meridians are located here. Association points are points that are painful if there is a problem in the corresponding meridian or organ.
- c. Example: BL-18 is the liver association point and pain at this point indicates either a true liver problem or a problem along with liver meridian. The liver meridian runs over the hocks, so BL-18 is often painful when the animal has arthritis or other issues in its hocks.

#### **VII. Kidney Meridian**

- a. It is paired with the Bladder Meridian.
- b. The kidney in TCM is thought of as the root of all life. Important points on this meridian include KI-1 (the "shock" point) and KI-3 (a good point for urinary issues).

#### **VIII. Pericardium Meridian**

- a. PC has a powerful influence on emotions and is important for calming the mind.
- b. PC-6, located just above the carpus of the dog or cat and under the chestnut of the horse, is a good calming point.

#### **IX. Triple Heater Meridian**

- a. TH is paired with the Pericardium Meridian.
- b. It has points for calming such as TH-17, located below the ear of the horse or dog.

#### **X. Stomach Meridian**

- a. ST is important for the transportation of food and thus is used in cases of colic and diarrhea.

- b. ST-2 is a strong point located at the front of the eye. Stomach-36 is a strong point both for gastrointestinal motility as well as to stimulate Qi. It is located just below the tibial crest of the stifle.

#### **XI. Spleen Meridian**

- a. SP is paired with the Stomach Meridian.
- b. It is important in TCM to help the body maintain shape and form. It is used in any case of organ prolapse.
- c. SP-6 is a master point for obstetric problems. It is located on the inside of the thigh area.

#### **XII. Gallbladder Meridian**

- a. GB is important for tendon function as well as controlling judgment.
- b. GB-20 is located behind the ear and is a good calming point.

#### **XIII. Liver Meridian**

- a. It is paired with the Gallbladder Meridian.
- b. It is also important for tendon function as well as liver and muscle function.

#### **XIV. Lung Meridian**

- a. It is important for respiratory function and the dispersing of Qi throughout the body.

#### **XV. Large Intestine Meridian**

- a. LI is paired with the Lung Meridian.
- b. Large Intestine-2, behind the nares, is an important point for respiratory allergies, sneezing and rhinitis.
- c. Large Intestine-4, along the splint bone, is the master point for the face.

#### **XVI. Heart Meridian**

- a. It has functions related to anxiety, mental activity and the housing of the mind.

#### **XVII. Small Intestine Meridian**

- a. SI is paired with the Heart Meridian.
- b. It is important for receiving and transforming fluids.

#### **XVIII. Governing Vessel**

- a. GV is an unpaired meridian ascending up the midline along the spinal column to the brain, and down the front of the face.
- b. Baihui is located along this meridian and is considered the "100 meetings point." In the horse it is at the lumbosacral junction. In humans and other species, it is at GV-20 on top of the forehead. We often call it "the happy point."
- c. GV-26 is the point on the upper lip of the dog and on the tip of the nose of the horse and is a strong respiratory and cardiovascular stimulator point. It is also the point we stimulate when we apply a twitch to a horse for restraint. Stimulation of GV-26 in the horse induces a natural calming and studies have shown a horse's response to pain decreases dramatically when a twitch is in place.
- d. GV-28 is the point stimulated on a horse when we apply a lip chain.
- e. GV-25 is located between the nostrils of the horse and is a good appetite stimulation point.

#### **XIX. Conception Vessel**

- a. CV originates at the uterus and runs ventrally from the perineum to the throat.