

Use of Acupuncture in Physiotherapy

Acupuncture is part of Traditional Chinese Medicine and has been used by the Chinese for many years to treat a great variety of problems. In recent years acupuncture has become more popular in the West and is used within Physiotherapy as a form of pain relief. It can be very effective on both acute and chronic conditions due to its effect of stimulating endogenous opioids (the natural pain killers) and other neurotransmitters such as serotonin (the “happy hormone”) produced within the body.

Many people report a reduction in pain, improved sleeping pattern and a general well being boost with acupuncture. Research is now showing very positive results for treatment of specific areas with acupuncture, such as recent studies on osteoarthritis of the knee.

Physiotherapists using acupuncture tend to be part of the Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists and have, therefore, had a recognisable training and are reviewed at two yearly intervals to renew membership. Within a Clinic set-up it can be used for any area. As with any treatment there are contra indications and precautions.

When patients are first seen they are screened by asking questions about their symptoms and general health. They are given an information sheet. This explains the procedure and effects. All needles are sterile, pre-packed and disposable so there is no risk of infection.

Once the decision has been made to use acupuncture and the patient has agreed and signed a consent form, decisions are made as to appropriate positioning of needles. This depends on the area to be treated and the sensitivity of the tissues. Points can be local to the area to be treated or further away. The Chinese use meridians that are mapped out. These are thought of as energy channels and the Chinese would look to balancing Yin and Yang.

Acupuncture is a useful adjunct to Physiotherapy, particularly in the treatment of inflammatory joint conditions. Reducing a patients' pain can enable them to achieve more in the rest of their Physiotherapy programme, such as increased range of movement and exercise tolerance.

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