



Medical Acupuncture

A promising solution to the opioid crisis

Modern medicine has made tremendous strides in the treatment of many diseases and health conditions, most of which were incurable or untreatable in the past. This also holds true for the management of acute pain following trauma, surgery, and other self-limited illnesses.

Unfortunately, despite these substantial advances in modern science, millions of people around the world suffer from unresolved chronic pain.

Many powerful pain medications temporarily reduce or abolish pain; but they don't address the underlying causes of discomfort, so the pain comes back when the medication wears off. To make matters worse, these medications are frequently addictive and, over time, become less effective so more and more medication is required to stop the pain. This creates the dangerous cycle that has led to the modern-day opioid crisis, which has had enormous health, financial, and social implications on our families, our communities and our country.

For 3,000 years, acupuncture has been a trusted technique used by healthcare providers in many parts of the world.

Though "modern medicine" has long been skeptical of acupuncture's place in Western healthcare, a growing base of solid research and science points toward the many benefits of acupuncture, chief among them its significant pain relieving properties.

Statements made by some of the most trusted medical groups in this country — including the American Medical Association, the American College of physicians, the American Academy of Family Physicians and American Pain Society — support the use of acupuncture as part of a treatment plan for patients with chronic pain.

Acupuncture is safe, has no addictive potential and costs less than most medications. Perhaps more importantly, it has favorable effects on various physiological systems in the body, so it often addresses the *underlying causes* of pain. All these attributes make it almost ideal for treatment of pain.

A growing number of physicians (MDs and DOs) are offering acupuncture as part of an integrative healthcare practice.

When acupuncture is administered by qualified physicians, it's called "medical acupuncture." These physicians are trained in both modern medicine and acupuncture, which gives them the ability to examine a problem, make a diagnosis, and offer treatment options from both the modern medical and acupuncture standpoint.

With the judicious use of medicine and acupuncture during an acute pain problem, a medical acupuncturist may be able to prevent its progression to chronic pain, thereby eliminating the need for long-term narcotic therapy, which would be ideal. For patients who have been in chronic pain and are addicted to narcotics, medical acupuncturists are well equipped to be part of the team that can safely taper pain medications, using acupuncture and other adjunctive medications as necessary.

Addiction appears to affect a victim's body, mind and spirit. Acupuncture appears to have a beneficial effect on all three of these aspects, thus providing a comprehensive management of the patient's problems.

Given our collective experience and clinical knowledge, the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture (AAMA) strongly supports the scientific findings that medical acupuncture can play a crucial role in fighting the opioid crisis.

Patients looking for medical doctors with training in medical acupuncture can find physician acupuncturists in their area listed on the website of the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture. Visit the AAMA website and click on "Find an Acupuncturist."

www.medicalacupuncture.org

