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ECHO Idaho: Opioid Addiction and Treatment

Acupuncture and Pain Conditions

11/08/18

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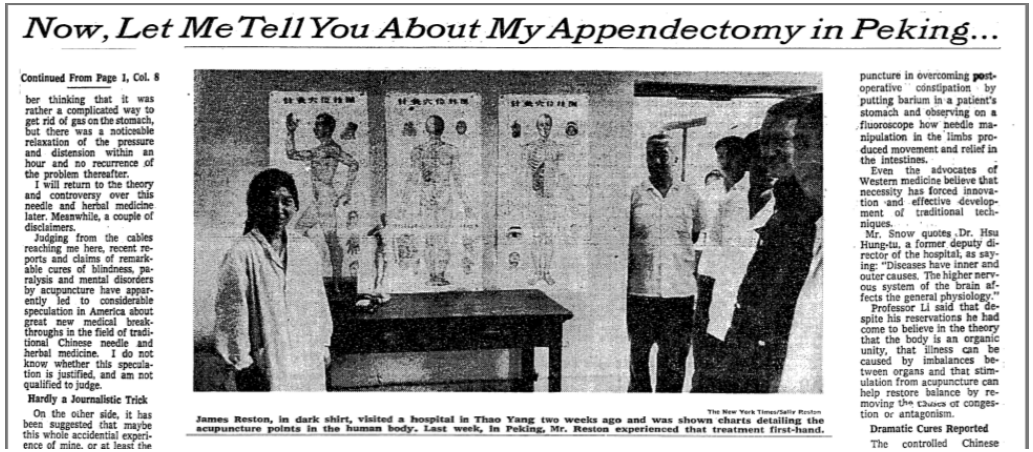
The speaker has no significant financial conflicts of interest to disclose.

Discussion Points

- Mechanism of action of acupuncture
- Evidence for acupuncture in pain conditions
- Limitations of research
- How to counsel patients on acupuncture

Acupuncture Heads West

- New York Times; July, 1971



Now, Let Me Tell You About My Appendectomy in Peking...

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ber thinking that it was rather a complicated way to get rid of gas on the stomach, but there was a noticeable relaxation of the pressure and distension within an hour and no recurrence of the problem thereafter.

I will return to the theory and controversy over this needle and herbal medicine later. Meanwhile, a couple of disclaimers.

Judging from the cables reaching me here, recent reports and claims of remarkable cures of blindness, paralysis and mental disorders by acupuncture have apparently led to considerable speculation in America about great new medical breakthroughs in the field of traditional Chinese needle and herbal medicine. I do not know whether this speculation is justified, and am not qualified to judge.

Hardly a Journalistic Trick

On the other side, it has been suggested that maybe this whole accidental experience of mine, or at least the

The New York Times/Sally Reston

James Reston, in dark shirt, visited a hospital in Thao Yang two weeks ago and was shown charts detailing the acupuncture points in the human body. Last week, in Peking, Mr. Reston experienced that treatment first-hand.

puncture in overcoming post-operative constipation by putting barium in a patient's stomach and observing on a fluoroscope how needle manipulation in the limbs produced movement and relief in the intestines.

Even the advocates of Western medicine believe that necessity has forced innovation and effective development of traditional techniques.

Mr. Snow quotes Dr. Hsu Hung-tu, a former deputy director of the hospital, as saying: "Diseases have inner and outer causes. The higher nervous system of the brain affects the general physiology."

Professor Li said that despite his reservations he had come to believe in the theory that the body is an organic unity, that illness can be caused by imbalances between organs and that stimulation from acupuncture can help restore balance by removing the causes of congestion or antagonism.

Dramatic Cures Reported

The controlled Chinese

- Modern providers
  - LAc
  - "Medical acupuncture"

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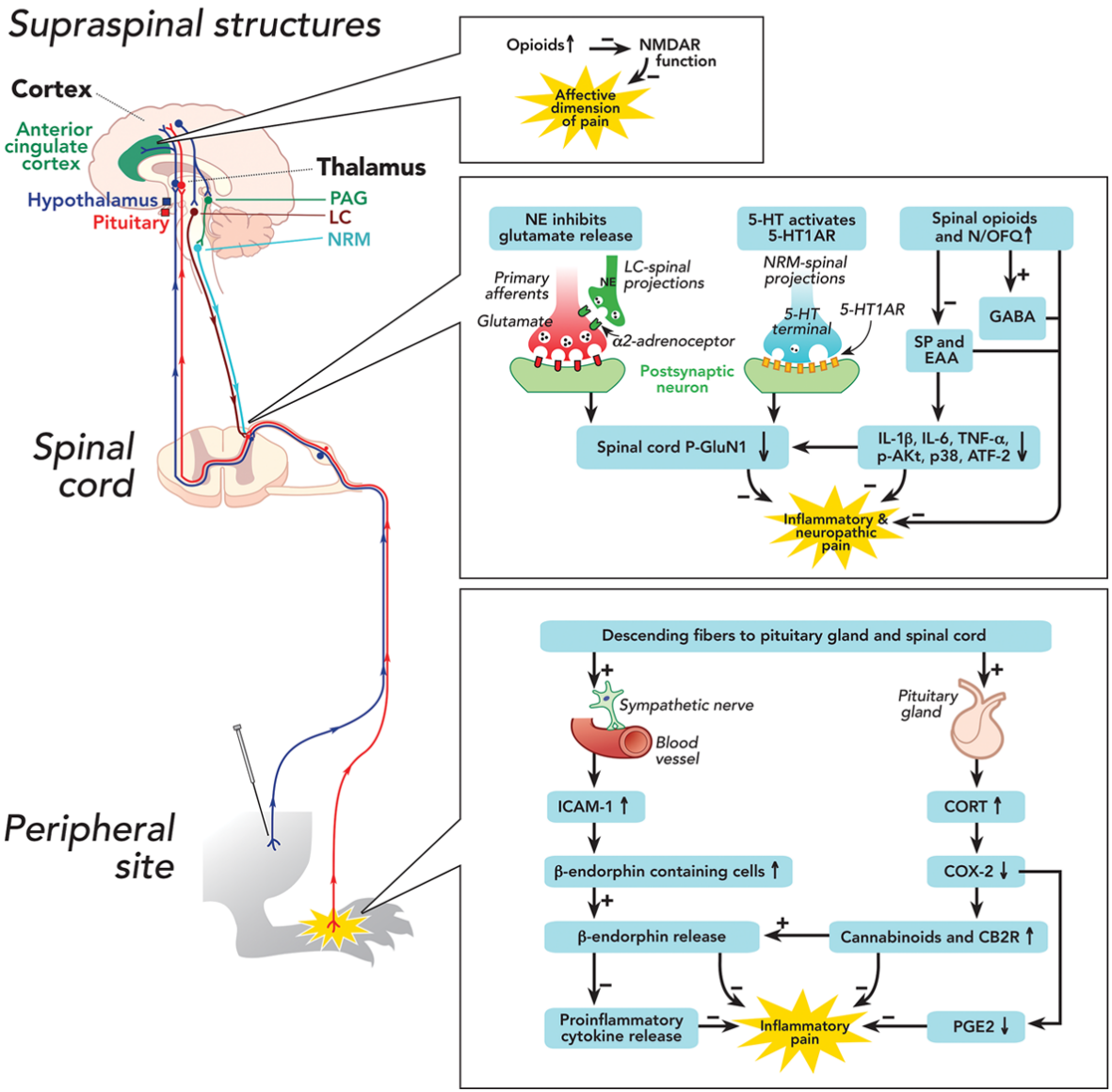
Electroacupuncture Mechanisms on Persistent Pain



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Cochrane Meta-Analysis

- Low-moderate evidence:
  - Fibromyalgia pain/stiffness
  - Peripheral OA
  - Episodic migraine prevention
  - Labor pain management
  - Postoperative pain management

Low back pain

- NEJM 2010. Acupuncture for Chronic Low Back Pain
  - Meta-analysis 2008; 6359 patients
    - Conclusion: Real acupuncture no more effective than sham, however more effective than usual care
    - Subsequent meta-analysis from Cochrane Back Review Group agreed
  - German studies:
    - 1162 patients over 8 years randomly assigned real/sham/conventional therapy
      - Sham=real, but significantly > conventional therapy (>33% improvement on Von Korff Chronic Pain Scale or >12% Hannover Functional Ability Questionnaire.
- JAMA 2009. RCT Comparing Acupuncture, Simulated Acupuncture, and Usual Care
  - Mean dysfunction scores improved by ~4.5 for acupuncture vs. 2.1 with usual care

Migraine/Headache

- Cochrane Review, June 2016
  - Acupuncture for the prevention of episodic migraine.
  - Conclusion: Reduction in frequency of migraines comparable to standard prophylactic treatments
  - Real acupuncture > sham
  - Need longer term studies
- JAMA, April 2017
  - 2 year study, 245 patients. 20 sessions of acupuncture. Primary outcome- frequency of migraines.
  - Conclusion: At 16 weeks, significant improvement in TA group. Indicates likelihood for long term results
  - Electroacupuncture >sham/waiting list (control)

Reducing Opioid Consumption

- Efforts to reduce Opioid Consumption After Total Knee Arthroplasty.
- Large meta-analysis JAMA Surg 2017
  - 2391 patients, 39 RCTs
  - Electrotherapy/acupuncture reduce or delay opioid consumption, but may not improve pain scores (moderate)
  - Continuous passive movement, preoperative exercise, cryotherapy do not improve pain or reduce opioid consumption

What do the guidelines say?

- From the American College of Physicians
- Recommendation 1: Given that most patients with acute or subacute low back pain improve over time regardless of treatment, clinicians and patients should select nonpharmacologic treatment with superficial heat (moderate-quality evidence), massage, acupuncture, or spinal manipulation (low-quality evidence). If pharmacologic treatment is desired, clinicians and patients should select nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or skeletal muscle relaxants (SMRs) (moderate-quality evidence). (Grade: strong recommendation)
- Recommendation 2: For patients with chronic low back pain, clinicians and patients should initially select nonpharmacologic treatment with exercise, multidisciplinary rehabilitation, acupuncture, mindfulness-based stress reduction (moderate-quality evidence), tai chi, yoga, motor control exercise, progressive relaxation, electromyography biofeedback, low-level laser therapy, operant therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, or spinal manipulation (low-quality evidence). (Grade: strong recommendation)

Challenges in research

- Funding
- Variation of end-points used
- “Last resort” bias
- Difference in treatment
  - General approach
  - Number of needles used
  - Number of sessions
  - Duration of treatment
- Use of sham /simulated versus true acupuncture
- Partial treatment in sham acupuncture
- Role of patients’ beliefs, expectations, attention from provider

But I'm in rural Idaho…

- LAc in:
  - Boise
  - Meridian
  - Salmon
  - Sandpoint
  - Moscow
  - Coeur D Alene
  - Hailey
  - Bonners Ferry
  - Hope
  - Ketchum

- Cocolalla
- Twin Falls
- Idaho Falls
- Driggs
- Hayden
- Blackfoot
- McCall

Physician Providers:

- Ketchum
- Blackfoot
- Eagle
- Nampa
- Pocatello
- McCall
- Idaho Falls

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How to use this information

- Get to know your local resources
  - Use NCCAOM.org website to find local L.Ac.
  - Use AAMA.org website to find local medical acupuncturists
- Consider referring your patient particularly for migraine prophylaxis, back pain
  - (OR ANYTHING ELSE)
- Consider training

Key Points

- Acupuncture is a low-risk procedure that may be useful in acute and chronic pain conditions
- There are inherent challenges in researching acupuncture.
- Get to know your local resources, and give it a try yourself!

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