



Nerve Healing through Acupuncture

by Shoshanna Katzman

The ancient healing art of acupuncture is traditionally known to provide much needed relief for nerve pain, tingling, burning, numbness as well as other symptoms associated with nerve damage or impingement. The Chinese medicine approach to address these symptoms includes eliminating inflammation and blockage of qi (vital energy) based on the belief that lack of proper flow of qi and blood prevents nourishment from reaching the cells and tissues which leads to pain and dysfunction.

Acupuncture opens flow of energy within the meridian system (energy pathways) which may be at the root of pain and numbness in addition to that caused by the original nerve damage or impingement. In doing so, acupuncture works by balancing and modulating two energetic conditions known as yin and yang, which are representative of the existence of polar opposites within and outside of the body.

Acupuncture treatment is thus directed toward opening and building flow of qi and blood within both the affected area and throughout the body through release of energetic blockages. In turn, this nullifies symptoms and improves nerve function, while simultaneously strengthening and building overall health. An acupuncturist adds specific points to address the particular condition causing the nerve symptoms.

For example, a condition resulting from nerve damage known as peripheral

neuropathy is generally described according to Chinese medicine as stemming from excessive dampness moving to the limbs and blocking their flow of qi and blood. In this case, acupuncture treatment would also focus on addressing such underlying dampness.

Numerous research studies have been conducted that support the usage of acupuncture in the treatment of symptoms resulting from nerve dysfunction. A 2009 study published in the *European Journal of Neurology* demonstrates that acupuncture provides immediate symptom relief for peripheral neuropathy, along with improved nerve conduction and regeneration. The World Health Organization has also stated that it recognizes acupuncture as helpful in the treatment of neurological conditions such as peripheral neuropathy.

Furthermore, findings published in *Neural Regeneration Research* in 2015 found that acupuncture was responsible for the repair of injured motor nerves of the lower and upper limb. This study used electromyographic nerve conduction tests and determined that acupuncture significantly promotes functional nerve repair and improves motor nerve conduction velocity and amplitude.

Another study that was published in *Experimental and Toxicologic Pathology* in 2011 explored the effectiveness of electro-acupuncture for regeneration of nerve cells in rats with spinal cord injury.

Results showed that the usage of electro-acupuncture along with other therapies was effective in the restoring the partial function of their paralyzed limbs.

Such results are most certainly helpful to know, especially for those seeking alternative treatment to complement help received from allopathic medicine. Combining physical therapy, therapeutic massage and/or chiropractic with acupuncture addresses the structural component and thus leads to longer lasting results. In some cases, acupuncture is provided in conjunction with additional Chinese medicine treatments such as cupping, herbal application and dietary recommendations to achieve speedier results.

Acupuncture for nerve damage or impingement is most effective when treatment is received early on in the occurrence of the symptoms. Treatments are quite relaxing and surprisingly painless. Acupuncture needles are pre-sterilized, single-use, extremely thin and made of solid stainless steel. They are not putting something in or drawing out of your body, but rather stimulating your body's innate healing response through activating the flow of qi.

Addressing the "whole person" is one of acupuncture's strongest suits. Acupuncture is holistic in nature and gains results from working with the specific symptoms while also strengthening the innate healing power of the individual. It provides treatment based on the individual needs of each person.

Symptoms caused by nerve entrapment or damage can be debilitating at best and take longer to heal than one would expect. The great hope is that acupuncture can speed up this process while working to ameliorate the condition. In the meantime, receiving acupuncture also helps bolster ability to tolerate and better handle such symptoms and bring with it an overall sense of being, which is "worth its weight in gold."

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