



Clearing Inflammation

by Shoshanna Katzman



Asian medicine views inflammation as the root cause of many health problems. Its ancient texts describe inflammation as ‘internal heat’ and recommend various methods and lifestyle habits for clearing it from the system. Techniques such as acupuncture have been employed to treat chronic pain and other conditions associated with inflammation for centuries.

An acupuncturist typically evaluates the level of heat or inflammation through observation and asking questions about a person’s symptoms, emotional state and lifestyle habits. Further information is gathered through evaluating levels of tightness, tenderness, pain or discoloration while palpating their meridian (energetic) pathways. Due to the association of meridians to the vital organs, this oftentimes connects levels of inflammation with a particular energetic organ system.

An acupuncturist also looks for clues about a person’s constitution by evaluating their tongue and radial pulse. For example, a red tongue body or a rapid pulse indicate the presence of excess heat within the body. Information gathered is then woven together to arrive at an energetic diagnosis that is used as a basis for treatment.

Acupuncture points are chosen based on the diagnosis and needled on the surface of the skin. The purpose is to restore energetic balance via a needling technique that accesses qi (vital energy) at the site of insertion to disperse accumulation of inflammatory heat. Points to dampen fire (yang) within the energetic system are often combined with points to nourish water (yin) of the body.

Lifestyle recommendations to clear inflammation include reducing or eliminating consumption of hot spicy foods, alcohol and refined sugar. Learning to deal more effectively with stress and express feelings as they arise is also important. This is particularly true

for anger as it has the tendency to build up and turn into excessive heat within the liver meridian.

Research has been evaluating the role of acupuncture in triggering nerve signaling in terms of its functional impact on various aspects of the body including the vital organs. In fact, a study conducted on mice in 2021 by neuroscientists at Harvard Medical School has “elucidated the underlying neuroanatomy of acupuncture that activates a specific signaling pathway.”

Its researchers were particularly interested in observing the effect of acupuncture on the “cytokine storm” – involving the rapid release of large amounts of cytokines known to be the driving force behind severe, systemic levels of inflammation. Interestingly, a prior study conducted in 2014 found that electroacupuncture could reduce a cytokine storm in mice by activating the vagal-adrenal axis which is a pathway whereby the vagus nerve signals the adrenal glands to release dopamine.

There is still much to be learned about the efficacy of acupuncture. Interest in this ancient modality is growing and scientific investigation is discovering ways in which it helps to maintain health and longevity. Acupuncture has long been held as a modality that restores health through opening blockages of qi. It will be fascinating to see what science discovers about its medical potential in our modern world – most likely confirming what the ancients have always known to be true.

Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S. has been director of Red Bank Acupuncture & Wellness Center in Shrewsbury, NJ approaching thirty-five years where she provides acupuncture, Chinese herbal consultation and classes in Taiji and Qigong. She is author of Qigong for Staying Young: A Simple 20-Minute Workout to Cultivate Your Vital Energy and co-author of Feeling Light: The Holistic Solution to Permanent Weight Loss and Wellness. Shoshanna will soon be releasing Center of Power: Life Mastery through Taiji – a comprehensive curriculum with over 130 videos. For more information call or text 732.758.1800 or email info@healing4u.com.