



Acupuncture in neurological conditions

Author combines Western and traditional Chinese Medicine concepts of treatment

Acupuncture expert Clare Donnellan, co-author of *Acupuncture in Neurological Conditions* (Churchill Livingstone) aims to improve patient care by combining Western and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) concepts of treatment.

The language of TCM is uniquely combined with evidence-based clinical reasoning to provide an approach relevant to both acupuncture and physiotherapy clinical practice.

In the book, Chinese medical patterns relevant to the application of acupuncture are described, as well as key patterns of dysfunction based on a Western medical perspective. The place of acupuncture within the overall management of different neurological conditions is also discussed. The book offers clinical reasoning options from both TCM and Western medical perspectives and are illustrated by real cases from clinical practice.

IETF: What is the difference between the Western and TCM concepts of treatment?

Donnellan: Western Medical Acupuncture is based on insights gained from the scientific literature. For example, how information about pain is processed in the nervous system and how it may be modulated by acupuncture.

Acupuncture based on TCM draws insights from the traditional Chinese literature on acupuncture as practiced over thousands of years.

IETF: What evidence is provided in the book to support these practices?

Donnellan: Relevant scientific papers have been examined and reported on. In addition, a wide range of actual patient case studies are reported, for example, the use of acupuncture for people who have Parkinson's disease, stroke, multiple sclerosis, Guillain-Barre syndrome, etc.

Varying symptoms have been the target of treatment for example pain, sleep dysfunction, mood dysfunction, spasticity, etc.

IETF: What are some of the key patterns of dysfunction based on a Western medical perspective?

Donnellan: A key pattern of dysfunction might relate to the motor system. Motor dysfunction in people with neurological conditions may include inability to move (pareisis or paralysis) or "excessive motor activity," e.g. spasticity, rigidity or dyskinesia.

IETF: How can acupuncture work with, or apart from, Western medicine to treat neurological conditions?

Donnellan: People with neurological conditions report a wide range of problematic symptoms. Acupuncture can be an extremely valuable option alongside other treatments.

For example, a person with an acute relapse of multiple sclerosis may also report difficulty sleeping. This in turn may contribute to daytime fatigue and poor concentration. This may impact directly on that individual's ability to participate in active physical therapy or occupational therapy.

Acupuncture may therefore help the problematic symptom (e.g. sleep disturbance or pain) which in turn also allows an individual to gain the most benefit from any rehabilitation program that they may be receiving. Acupuncture may be used as a stand-alone therapy, but considering the complexity of presentation of many people with neurological conditions, its use within the context of a specialist multidisciplinary healthcare team can be invaluable.

IETF: The book covers many conditions ranging from Parkinson's disease to spinal cord injury. While there is nothing specific regarding ET, can you offer any comment on the practical application of acupuncture for this condition?

Donnellan: As with all neurological conditions, the use of acupuncture will be aiming to improve symptoms such as pain, anxiety, muscle dysfunction, sleep dysfunction,

etc. Whilst some symptoms may resolve entirely with acupuncture, often just an improvement in symptoms is useful to the individual. I would suggest that people with essential tremor may also report sleep disturbance, pain, etc. and therefore in this context acupuncture may be very helpful.

IETF: What other key points might people want to consider when reading the book and consulting with a specialist about acupuncture?

Donnellan: I think it is important for people to have realistic expectations of treatment, i.e. not to expect a miracle cure but to hope for some reduction of problematic symptoms. Regarding practitioners of acupuncture, you would want to know they were fully qualified and accredited by the relevant professional body.



Our Mission:
The IETF funds research to find the cause of essential tremor (ET) that leads to treatments and a cure, increases awareness, and provides educational materials, tools, and support for healthcare providers, the public, and those affected by ET.