



WESTERN NEUROPATHY ASSOCIATION

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ACUPUNCTURE FOR PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY AND WNA MEMBER SUCCESSES!

Background

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, pain and dysfunction as a result of peripheral neuropathy are caused by a blockage of qi-energy and blood. If qi-energy and blood don't flow properly, it prevents cells and tissues from receiving nourishment and can lead to pain and functional problems. In addition, depending on the symptoms experienced, there may be specific meridians that are also affected by the condition. This can affect where the pain and numbness are occurring, and can also be responsible for accompanying symptoms. Acupuncture treatment typically involves both local points to treat the affected meridians and the symptoms experienced, combined with points for strengthening and building up the body to augment qi-energy and blood.²

Clinical Trials

The Neurology Wellness Clinic at OHSU recently examined the evidence for acupuncture in the treatment of peripheral neuropathy. They systematically reviewed 46 clinical trials and included 13 qualifying randomized controlled trials of acupuncture against sham acupuncture or standard medical therapy and concluded that acupuncture is effective in the treatment of diabetic neuropathy, Bell's palsy, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and it is most likely effective for the treatment of HIV-related neuropathy.¹

Typical Treatment

Patients with peripheral neuropathy are routinely treated at the Neurology Wellness Clinic at OHSU and some of their best results are with idiopathic neuropathy. A typical treatment course consists of weekly sessions with electroacupuncture for 6-8, sometimes 10 weeks, followed by gradual spacing out to every other week, every third week, once a month and eventually maintenance treatment once every 2-3 months.¹

Acupuncture Successes

In the August meeting of the Houston Support Group, three attendees shared their success with acupuncture in relieving their neuropathy symptoms.

After starting to lose feeling in his feet in early 2018, John FitzGerald started vitamin B12-complex food supplement (MetaNx) in February 2019. His feet immediately started feeling better. In September 2019 he added weekly acupuncture treatments and the neuropathy symptoms subsided even more. Upon the recent completion of his 53rd treatment (approximately every other week for 2.5 years), his feet feel 98% better. He still has balance issues when starting to walk from a stopped position, so he uses a walking cane per his neurologist's suggestion.

Marge Healy had initial success with her acupuncture, but she stopped treatment during the Covid pandemic. During the support group meeting she said that she is feeling a lot more pain. Marge restarted her treatment 10 days later with acupuncture on her feet and legs. Later that day, she wrote her group leader stating she felt so much better!

Don Tallman has been receiving acupuncture treatments through the Veterans Hospital for several years for numbness and pain in his feet and legs. Before the pandemic, the numbness has subsided from his knees to his feet with the pain decreasing to almost nothing. During the pandemic the treatments stopped and the pain and numbness returned. Since he started acupuncture in the last two months, the numbness and pain have again been reduced.

As always, what works for these members may not work for everyone. As stated by Don Tallman during a support group meeting – each of us is an “Experiment of One”.

If you try acupuncture, here are two additional details: Don uses electroacupuncture and Marge says in her experience the more needles the better!

REFERENCES

¹ Alexandra Dimitrova, MD, Acupuncture and diet changes to treat neuropathic pain, *OHSU Blog*, September 24, 2015, retrieved August 18, 2021 from <https://blogs.ohsu.edu/brain/2015/09/24/acupuncture-and-diet-changes-to-treat-neuropathic-pain/>

² James Kaufman, Kaufman: Treating nerve damage with acupuncture, Kelowna Capital News – Lifestyle, September 3, 2013, retrieved August 25, 2021 from <https://www.nccaom.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Effect%20Peripheral%20neuropathy.pdf>