Princeton Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Treats Physical and Emotional Conditions

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Some people go to law school or business school; others learn on the job; still others go from career to career, seeking the right fit.

But not many find their occupation unexpectedly in a serendipitous moment, as Steven Hoffman did.

"I came to acupuncture through martial arts," he explains. "I had jammed my thumb, and it was wrapped in a bandage when I came to my martial arts class. The instructor, also a trained acupuncturist, looked at it and said, 'I'll fix that!'

"He did, and it was instant relief. That was my introduction to acupuncture."

New Direction

Not only was his thumb healed, the experience led him into a new direction. He moved on from his career as owner of an environmental contracting company and became a healer in acupuncture.

"I had always been active in sports, and interested in how the body works," says Hoffman. "Now that I had seen the benefits of acupuncture personally, I determined that I wanted to help others overcome their painful conditions and feel better."

He studied at the Eastern School of Acupuncture and Traditional (Oriental) Medicine, and after three years, graduated as a licensed acupuncturist. In addition, he went on to graduate work, becoming a diplomate in Oriental medicine.

Ten years ago, he opened Princeton Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, and this year, he relocated his practice to 166 Bunn Drive.

Acupuncture, known as alternative medicine in some circles, involves the insertion of very thin (hair-like) needles into strategic points of the body. A key component of Chinese medicine, it has been used for centuries to treat pain.

Many Western practitioners view the acupuncture points as places to stimulate nerves, muscles, and connective tissue. Some believe that this stimulation boosts the body's natural painkillers.

Overall Wellness

Traditionally, it has been used mainly to relieve discomfort associated with a variety of diseases and conditions, including headaches, backaches, neck pain, osteoarthritis, and dental pain. Increasingly, however, acupuncture is being used for overall wellness, including stress management.

"Acupuncture provides help in several ways," explains Hoffman. "It has an analgesic effect and promotes pain relief. It induces the body to produce specific hormones, such as Serotonin, which is a mood enhancer.

"It also decreases inflammation. Acupuncture trains the body to decrease the inflammatory response. In addition, it increases the blood flow, and the blood circulation helps heal the body."

Hoffman also incorporates electro acupuncture in his treatment. This can target specific neuro chemicals, he explains, and is a useful technique for many patients.

The majority of Hoffman's patients, who are all ages, are treated for joint pain, including back, neck, knee, hip, etc. However, he can also help patients with depression, anxiety, fatigue, and digestive problems.

Overall wellness and stress management are on the minds of many today, as people continue to cope with COVID-19. "Stress is a big factor today," reports Hoffman. "If someone comes in with neck pain, it can stem from stress and anxiety. It's the 'fight or flight' syndrome, but if it's on-going, low-level, and constant stress, it can stimulate the adrenal glands and produce adrenalin. This can become a problem."

"Tech Neck"

Hoffman also notes the "tech neck" condition today, with stiff or painful necks seen in all ages, resulting from constantly looking down at a smartphone or other electronic devices.

"Also," he continues, "sometimes symptoms in one area can actually originate from another area. For example, hip pain can originate in the back. And digestive issues can be a problem. They can affect the organs, and the patient may not be getting the benefit of their nutrition."

In addition to the needles, Hoffman may prescribe a particular Chinese medicine herbal formula. Combined, the two remedies can bring further benefits to the patient. As he explains, "The acupuncture and formulas used together can help the blood flow. They work synergistically."

He also may prescribe vitamin D and fish oil supplements, and exercises to be done at home. "Each patient has individual symptoms and is treated accordingly," he notes.

When a new patient comes in, Hoffman first does a complete evaluation. "We get a full health review, a thorough exploration. When people come, they are often at their wit's end. They have tried other remedies, but have had no relief.

"We discuss the pain factor, how it affects their life. How is it interfering with what they want to do? Mostly, I focus on joint pain that is chronic and has become a serious problem."

Healing Process

He points out that the patient's age and severity of the condition are factors in the healing process. "The longer the problem has existed, the longer it will take to treat it. But I want people to know that there is help. The situation is not hopeless, and you are not helpless."

A typical treatment takes a half hour to 45 minutes, and six to 10 sterile one-time use needles are inserted into the areas he has identified as the focus points. The needles are so thin that most patients experience no discomfort, or very little.

Results vary depending on the severity of the condition and length of time it has been present. A common treatment plan for a single complaint typically involves two treatments per week. The total number of treatments required will vary from patient to patient, and Hoffman provides a comprehensive
treatment plan with the number of visits clearly laid out so that there are no surprises.

The age of the patient is also a factor. Typically older people take longer to heal, and as Hoffman says "Regarding age and healing ability, the sooner you come, the better. So don't wait!

"But I can prevent further problems and keep the condition from getting worse. I can also set up a maintenance program, and help you rediscover your energy and vitality. I'll put you in

touch with a comprehensive diagnosis and treatment plan, herbal advice and nutritional support, wellness counseling, and tips on maintaining long-term health."

Diet can also be a factor, he adds, noting that certain foods can increase inflammation. "It's a good idea to avoid cookies and candy," he points out. "Try to eat one-ingredient foods — fruit, vegetables, seafood, and low-fat meat. This can make a difference."

Full Activity

The virus is a factor in everyone's lives today, and Hoffman is incorporating all the safety precautions in his practice. Everything is sterilized, sanitized, and disinfected, and no one is in the waiting room. Patients call or text from their car when they arrive.

He is very encouraged as more studies show the benefits of acupuncture, and increasing numbers of people are coming to him for help. Indeed, helping his patients return to full activity is Hoffman's main priority.

"My goal is to let people know what I do and that I can help them. I want them to get back to their life. One of my most rewarding experiences was when I helped a patient whose only comfortable position was standing up. After treatment, he was able to say, 'I feel better. I am finally able to sleep.' This was very gratifying.

"If you have ongoing pain or a condition that doesn't get better, call today, don't wait!"

Costs for treatment vary based on the condition and the length of time it has existed. Insurance plans cover acupuncture for certain conditions. Appointments are available Tuesday and Thursday afternoon and evening, and Saturday morning.