

ACUPUNCTURE

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Acupuncture is derived from the Latin word acus = needle and pungo = puncture. The application of acupuncture on human beings and animals is dated back to approx. 3000 years B.C. as Huang Ti, The Yellow Emperor in China is said to have used acupuncture already in the year 2697 B.C. on his soldiers and horses to increase their staying power.

It turned out that by treating a point at the side of the knee, a soldier's marching distance could be increased by approx. 3 miles a day and by treating the same point on the cavalry horses, their staying power could be increased correspondingly.

The first records concerning the philosophic and practical basis are described in "The Yellow Emperor's Textbook of Internal Medicine" - "Nei Ching", whose theories with modifications and additions though still today form the basis of the practical application of acupuncture and during the latest 4500 years have been the foundation of the treatment and prevention of diseases for at least one fourth of the world's population.

It is interesting to note that "Nei Ching" shows that China was ahead of the Western World in the development of many areas. "The Yellow Emperor's" people wore clothes and lived in houses when we still wore animal's skins and lived in caves. They invented vehicles on wheels, a particular notation and the art of writing. 4000 years before Western scientists realised, they knew that the blood circulates through the body in veins and that our solar system has 9 planets.

Not until the beginning of the 1970s after President Nixon's visit to China did the Western World take a certain interest in acupuncture when it saw and heard about major operations made in China only under acupuncture anaesthesia. Since then acupuncture has gained ground and is recommended by WHO (World Health Organization) for treatment of numerous sufferings.

The Principle of Acupuncture

The basic principle of acupuncture is the philosophy that an energy current flows through the entire organism. The energy current flows through 12 paths, so-called meridians. On these meridians are tiny skin areas, acupuncture points. They are perceived as intermediate stations or sluices for the energy. If the energy current flows unimpeded, the body is healthy. If it is interrupted somewhere on account of a chemical, bacterial, viral, nutritional or physical influence, symptoms of diseases will appear and it will then be possible by means of the acupuncture points to detect where the interruption occurred and to re-establish the energy current to the affected area.

The acupuncture points were found by the old Chinese when they noticed that when the body was ill, special points in the skin became sore, and it was always the same points at the same diseases. As still more points were detected and marked on the body, it turned out that they followed certain lines - meridians.

Which systems can be influenced by Acupuncture

Acupuncture has a great effect on the nervous system, both the somatic one which takes care of our movements and is controlled by our will, and the autonomic self-governing one which is not influenced by our will and which goes to the internal organs. It has a pronounced stimulating effect on the immune system, it has a pain-relieving effect and is highly anti-inflammatory, that is, it decreases swellings and fluid sweating resulting from e.g. overloading and other sorts of injuries. It influences all vital physiological processes and has a therapeutic, that is, curing effect. Acupuncture is the most efficacious form of physiotherapy.

The Main Areas of Application of Acupuncture

are functional problems in the muscular and skeletal systems, the nervous system, both centrally and peripherally, the gastrointestinal canal, the reproductive organs, the urinary system and the respiratory passages. Furthermore, acupuncture has a relaxing effect on both the skeletal and organ muscular systems together with a distinct effect on the blood circulation, both centrally and peripherally. However, the main area of application is muscular-skeletal problems by injuries in the neck, back or limbs causing motor disturbances or reduced performance.

Acupuncture is not a replacement of modern, conventional medicine, but it can often be used as a supplement, and it has at the same time been efficacious in numerous sufferings where our Western medicine is insufficient or has too great a side effect.

Acupuncture can be used both Diagnostically and Therapeutically

By means of the acupuncture points the suffering can be located. If organs or parts of the body are exposed to sickly alterations, special points in skin and muscles will be sore when subjected to pressure as mentioned above. This reaction is caused by special nerve reflexes. As these points are related to the affected areas, stimulation of the points may result in a curing effect.

This stimulation has so far mainly been made by means of needles, but can also be made by laser beams which is a new and revolutionary method of acupuncture as it is both aseptic, painless and probably gives a better effect.

This diagnostic and therapeutic connection is of course only possible if the nervous system still functions and the affected area is able to react physiologically. Acupuncture is thus a fine supplement to the clinical examination as it can support it and often gives a more exact diagnosis and in many cases discloses sufferings not yet visible. The body and the acupuncture points will disclose a developing suffering even before it has become a problem so that by taking suitable precautions it can be prevented and treated. - The old Chinese doctors were by the way only paid by their clients when they kept them healthy.

Which sufferings by Horses can Advantageously be Treated by Acupuncture

Motor disturbances emanating from sufferings in or around the great limb joints: shoulder, elbow, hip and stifle and not least along the spinal column. Sufferings in those parts are as frequent as by human beings but often neglected.

The spinal column is not only a support apparatus for head, limbs and internal organs but together

with the spinal cord and its nerves a complicated organ which directs, controls and co-ordinates an essential part of the body functions. Overburdenings of the spinal column and its supporting structures may cause pain and alterations of the function not only in parts of the back and the surrounding tissue, but also in tissue and organs located farther away but which obtain their supply of nerves exactly from the area in the back where the suffering is.

Sufferings in the back may thus cause disturbances in the function of not only limbs, but also the internal organs, such as for example heart, lungs and the gastrointestinal system.

Nose bleeding and hemorrhages from the lungs are often a problem with especially race-horses. The hemorrhages from the lungs are not always visible, and in some cases they only appear as reduced performance. If the cause is genetically conditioned no effect is seen. In other cases the treatment is highly efficacious, it may be after recovered infections, excessive use of medicine as phenylbutazone and steroids, or stress causing too high a blood pressure, for example on account of pains from other areas.

Fertility problems are also an evident subject for acupuncture, be it lacking heat, cysts in the ovaries, diseases in the oviducts or in the uterus. Furthermore, early embryo death and re-heating caused by unspecific reasons. Also fertility problems of several reasons in stallions.

The immune defense can be increased considerably by acupuncture as the treatment causes a rapidly entering, rather long-lasting and good resistance to virus and bacterium infections together with allergies. Many skin diseases including allergic reactions, and allergies manifesting themselves by disease in other organs, e.g. the lungs, are another area.

Also by navicular bone disease and especially chronic laminitis good results are obtained - this also applies to certain forms of neuro-paralyses, e.g. ataxi.

As in every other treatment, an exact diagnosis is a precondition for a fine result and it is likewise important in connection with the treatment to find the cause of the disease and if possible to remove it.

New injuries are of course easier to affect than old ones, both as the changes are minor, but also as a disregarded suffering will result in others because of the horse's effort to relieve and compensate and thus to alter the pattern of movement. An injury of the right hind leg may for example rapidly result in problems in the back and left foreleg or vice versa.

Although the horse must function as an athlete, the curing percentage by acupuncture treatment is nevertheless well above 80 for most of the above diseases.

Laser, an abbreviation of Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation, is the huge physical discovery of this century of a special type of infrared light which in humans and animals stimulates the organism's biological process whereby we achieve two things, a noticeably speedier and better tissue regeneration (healing) and pain relief. Even in the case of old injuries a new healing process begins. This means that one can, with advantage, use the laser for not only back injuries, but also for acute and chronic injuries in skin, tendons, tendon sheets, periost, bones, joints, muscles and nerves.

Selected reference: Clinical Acupuncture in the Horse. Acupuncture Point Locations and Meridian Functions. Marvin J. Cain, DVM and Philip A. M. Rogers, M.R.C.V.S. 1987.