An Interview With Xiaoming Tian, L.Ac., C.M.D.

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Xiaoming Tian, L.Ac., C.M.D., has been director of the Academy of Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine and the Wildwood Acupuncture Center, in Bethesda, Maryland, since 1986. He is also an adjunct assistant professor of preventive medicine at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, which provides training to military physicians, nurses, and educators. Dr. Tian is a member of the National Advisory Council for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. He has conducted research projects, with NIH grant support, on acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, and dietary supplements. Dr. Tian was appointed as the first clinical consultant on acupuncture at the NIH Clinical Center (1991) and served as a member on the White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy (2001-2002).

Dr. Tian received his medical degree from Beijing Medical University in China. He completed postdoctoral fellowships in bone pathology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and in biochemistry and ultrastructure at the National Institute on Aging and the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. He obtained the certificate of Doctor of Chinese Medicine issued by the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies.

What are the most common symptoms and conditions that you treat in your acupuncture clinic?

We treat over 80 symptoms and conditions in our clinic. From most to least common, the top 12 are

1. Chronic and acute pain
2. Osteoarthritis
3. Fibromyalgia
4. Sports injuries
5. Sciatica and neuralgia
6. Automobile-accident injuries
7. Autoimmune diseases
8. Allergies and asthma
9. Depression, anxiety, and stress
10. Bell's palsy and paralysis
11. Skin rashes and eczema
12. Side effects of chemotherapy and radiation therapy for cancer.

Most of our patients seek acupuncture treatment for pain and pain-related conditions. In my experience, acupuncture can be used for a number of symptoms and conditions, most often as a complementary therapy. For example, I have found acupuncture to be very useful to cancer patients, primarily for symptom management, but also to enhance immune function through increasing lymphocyte and natural killer cell activity. In arthritis, I have often found acupuncture beneficial as well—for joint pain, swelling, stiffness, and joint function, such as range of motion. I find that it is best used in the early stages of disease.

In some cases, we have used acupuncture as an alternative therapy—for example, in sciatica. Many of our patients come to acupuncture as a last hope, after limited progress with other therapies.

How does acupuncture help people who have chronic pain?

In traditional Chinese medicine theory, pain is described as the stagnation of qi, or vital energy, in the meridian system. Acupuncture is intended to enhance the free flow of qi and remove obstructions in the meridian in order to reduce pain. In Western medicine, several scientific theories have been advanced to explain the effects of acupuncture in treating pain and inflammation, such as the gate theory, the endorphin theory, and the adrenocortotrophic hormone (ACTH) hypothesis.

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>
> — Dr. Xiaoming Tian

In addition to pain management, patients in our practice may experience other benefits from acupuncture—such as increased energy, better mood, improved sleep quality, and feeling less stressed. Our clinic takes a holistic, comprehensive approach that includes recommendations on keeping a healthy diet and exercising regularly. We also recommend the practice of qi gong or tai chi, with a goal of balancing the mind and body. Many of our patients continue with acupuncture on a maintenance basis.

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New Resources from NCCAM

NCCAM sponsors a Complementary and Integrative Medicine Consult Service lecture series at NIH, which is targeted to NIH Clinical Center staff and also available to the public on the Web (live and archived). Currently a monthly series, its topics address how the integration of CAM treatments can affect approaches into the research and practice of medicine. Recent speakers have included Tracy W. Gaudet, M.D., Duke Center on Integrative Medicine, on "Health Care Today: The Central Challenge," and Kevin W. Chen, Ph.D., M.P.H., Center for Integrative Medicine, University of Maryland School of Medicine, on "Introduction to Medical Qigong." Speakers and links to lectures are at nccam.nih.gov/research/consultservice/lecture.htm.

NCCAM Exhibits at Upcoming National Meetings

Society for Acupuncture Research, March 19-21, Chapel Hill

National Hispanic Medical Association, March 25-28, Washington, D.C.

Society of Behavioral Medicine, April 7-10, Seattle

American Pain Society, May 6-7, Baltimore

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How do you work with other health care providers?

I believe that it is important to work with the patient's physicians and other medical professionals in order to provide the best care and service for patients. We do this through open communication, providing progress reports, and making referrals as needed. We find that acupuncture works well in conjunction with conventional treatments—such as surgery, physical therapy, chemotherapy, and radiation—and with chiropractic therapy.

For More Information

Selected References

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM Clearinghouse; see pg. 2)

- *Acupuncture: An Introduction* (nccam.nih.gov/health/acupuncture/introduction.htm)
- *Acupuncture for Pain* (nccam.nih.gov/health/acupuncture/acupuncture-for-pain.htm)
- *Traditional Chinese Medicine: An Introduction* (nccam.nih.gov/health/whatiscam/chinesemed.htm)
- Resources for Health Care Providers (nccam.nih.gov/health/providers/)

Acupuncture (PDQ®): health professional version. National Cancer Institute Web site. Accessed at http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/cam/acupuncture/healthprofessional/allpages on January 7, 2010.

Li A, Lao L, Wang Y, et al. Electroacupuncture activates corticotrophin-releasing hormone-containing neurons in the paraventricular nucleus of the hypothalamus to alleviate edema in a rat model of inflammation. *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine*. 2008;8:20.

Roberts J, Moore D. *Mapping the Evidence Base and Use of Acupuncture Within the NHS*. Report no. 59. Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham; 2007.

Zijlstra FJ, van den Berg-de Lange I, Huygen FJ, et al. Anti-inflammatory actions of acupuncture. *Mediators of Inflammation*. 2003;12(2):59-69.