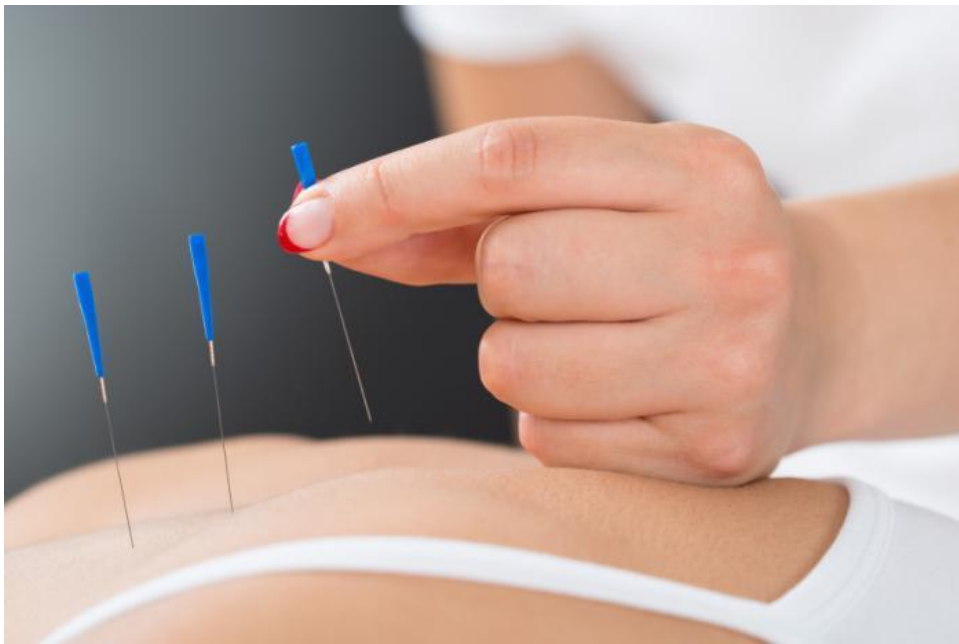


Fibromyalgia sufferers benefit from tailored acupuncture

From: Medical News Today, By Tim Newman Feb. 16, 2016

Fibromyalgia affects an estimated 5 million Americans, 80-90% of whom are women.

The disorder is characterized by widespread pain and diffuse tenderness. Although there is no cure, tailored acupuncture might provide some welcome respite, according to a new study.



Although difficult to categorize, fibromyalgia is considered a rheumatic condition because it impairs soft tissue and joints and causes pain.

Fibromyalgia carries with it a number of other life-disrupting symptoms that vary from individual to individual.

These symptoms can include muscle stiffness, headaches, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and sensitivity to temperature, sounds and bright lights.

The exact causes of fibromyalgia are not well understood; however, hypothesized culprits include traumatic or stressful life events and repetitive injuries.

There might also be links to other diseases such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis; some researchers believe there is a genetic component at work, too. Because there are no known biological markers, diagnosing fibromyalgia can be problematic. To reach a conclusive decision, other overlapping disorders must first be ruled out.

Because of these questions surrounding genesis and diagnosis, effective treatments for fibromyalgia are not forthcoming.

A recent study conducted at Doña Mercedes Primary Health Centre, in Seville, Spain, looked at the potential use of [acupuncture](#) to ease fibromyalgia's symptoms.

Acupuncture is used by 1 in 5 fibromyalgia patients within 2 years of diagnosis.

Previous clinical trials testing acupuncture's efficacy have been inconclusive, but ***these studies did not tailor the course of acupuncture to suit the individual needs of each fibromyalgia patient.***

To investigate whether this might make a difference, the research team, led by Dr. Teresa Leiva, compared tailored acupuncture against sham acupuncture in 153 patients. Sham acupuncture involved using the same guide tubes as the genuine acupuncture group, but without inserting needles. The sham treatment solely focused on the dorsal and lumbar regions.

Each patient (sham and tailored) received 20-minute-long treatments, every week for 9 weeks. During the trial, the patients continued taking any prescription drugs they were already using.

The participants completed questionnaires rating various parameters such as levels of pain, depression and the overall impact of the disease on their lives. These reviews were carried out before the trial, at 10 weeks, 6 months and 12 months.

Sham vs. tailored acupuncture in fibromyalgia

At the 10-week mark, the tailored acupuncture group reported a 41% drop in pain, whereas the sham acupuncture group reported a 27% reduction.

Twelve months later, the effect was still apparent. The tailored group and sham group reported 20% and 6% reductions in pain, respectively.

The questions that rated the overall impact of fibromyalgia on participant quality of life told the same story across all three time points. The tailored group reported reductions in the disease's negative impact of 35%, 25% and 22%; the sham acupuncture group, at the same points in time, registered reductions of 24.5%, 11% and 5%.

Also, general measures of anxiety, fatigue and depression were significantly better at the 10-week mark for the tailored acupuncture group. The differences were still evident after a year, but the researchers note that antidepressant usage in the group had also risen, making the results difficult to interpret.

The authors of the report, published in *Acupuncture in Medicine*, a *BMJ* journal, concluded:

“This treatment produced an improvement in the participants' condition [...] Such an outcome has not been reported by previous studies following the application of standardized treatments: therefore, our results suggest that applying individualized treatment algorithms when starting a course of acupuncture may be important.”

As the authors are quick to mention, this is the first time such a positive result has been found; additional, large-scale work will need to be carried out before solid conclusions

are drawn. Because current medication only deals with the symptoms of fibromyalgia, any intervention that can ease the [root of] suffering will be a welcome advance.

Medical News Today recently covered research showing that Acupuncture may be safe for children with chronic pain.