

THE BENEFITS OF SCALP ACUPUNCTURE

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During a conversation I had recently with friends, colleagues and community leaders in our state, we came up with an idea for a scalp acupuncture program that would help the public, the medical community and the acupuncture profession. This program would be in a hospital setting. It would serve people with acute conditions, starting at the acute stage and then shifting to the chronic stage and ultimately, to preventive care. At this final stage, the primary focus would be on health and well-being. In this article, I'd like to share my vision of this program with you.

Scalp acupuncture is a modality that creates zones on the scalp to deal with nervous system disorders, especially spinal cord injury and multiple sclerosis. It's similar to the way ear, foot and hand acupuncture represent micro systems for the entire body. These treatments are very effective just after a traumatic injury occurs, because the empirical effect is increased at this time.

The possible uses of scalp acupuncture are endless. One can use it with physical therapy, positioning the needles on corresponded points during body manipulation of limbs. This can be used in such cases as stroke. The needles can be manipulated while the patient is sitting, standing, or lying down.

One can use different diagnosis systems when creating a scalp protocol for the patient's condition. I find it very effective for acute or chronic pain conditions. The uses are primarily for neurological disorders or dysfunctions such as paralysis, sciatica, arthritic pain, but I found it very effective also for asthma, gastrointestinal disorders, headaches, and sinus related disorders. And of course one can use it to support body acupuncture, reinforcing the constitutional or other symptoms challenging the patient.

There are needle techniques that are specific to scalp acupuncture. Very fine needles are used at a 15 to 30 degree angle into the thin layer of scalp tissue. Periodically one can stimulate the needles while the patient is moving any part of the body for maximum effect, without injury or discomfort to the patient. Practitioners can use qigong-based breathing methods that help move the qi to the area needed. The patient

can also be instructed to visualize and focus on the area being stimulated, again to reinforce the therapy. One can use physical therapy-type exercises when manipulating the needles. From my own experience, the client can actually feel the changes within a short period of time, even in the 1st visit. They feel the pain lifting away, and they feel as if they are getting lighter. If there is weakness in a leg or arm, strength returns in the function of limbs while the patient is doing the physical therapy.

Basically, the zones are from GV24 across to GV20 1 cun wide which represents the front of body divided into 3 burners. From GV20 to GV17 is the back of body and follows the spine. There are zones for the upper and lower limbs for sensory and motor disorders. Shoulder and hip centers have their own zones. There are different headache zones for various headache symptoms, depending on whether they are temporal or occipital, for example. So one can choose locations on the scalp based on what the immediate needs are, and treat on a branch or root diagnosis basis.

The history of scalp acupuncture can be traced back many thousands of years. In various chapters, the "Miraculous Pivot" described the head and scalp as a major area where qi and blood converge because it is the meeting place of numerous regular channels—luo channels, extraordinary channels, muscle regions and cutaneous regions. A lot of acupoints fall on the scalp along these channels. They are often used in conjunction with body acupoints.

In the 50s, scalp acupuncture began to emerge

as a special therapeutic modality. The book, "New Acupuncture Therapies and Physiological Functions," (1935 by Xuelong Huang) introduced the relationship between the scalp and the functions of the cerebral cortex. Since then, many acupuncturists from Shanxi, Shaanxi, Shanghai and Nanjing explored the acupoints and zones on the scalp and found that puncturing certain points or zones on the scalp can treat diseases of the brain and other parts of the body. The therapeutic effects were particularly good for cerebrogenic diseases.

In the early 70s, many styles and schools of scalp acupuncture were formed and spread out in clinics both in China and abroad. In order to promote further development and international exchanges, The National Acupuncture and Moxabustion Association of China, under the commission of the WHO, drew up the International Standard of Scalp Acupuncture in 1984. Dr. Ming Qing Zhu, who developed his own popular scalp acupuncture system, was an active par-

ticipant of the International Standard Committee.

There are different Schools of Scalp Acupuncture that use different zones and points. The Jiao school divides the scalp diagrams into motor and sensory areas, Fang school into speech and reading centers, and Tang into upper, middle, and lower burner areas. Then there is the Zhu's school, which has multiple images of a human body on the scalp, combined with the TCM theory of yin-yang, zang-fu and meridians. The International Standard integrates all the above.

There are different schools teaching different styles of scalp acupuncture. If you're interested in learning about it, I recommend that you ask where scalp courses are being held in your area. This modality would be a great addition to your practice by providing another protocol for your patients. They would see the results immediately. I can suggest looking on www.scalpacupuncture.org and check out Dr. Zhu's class calendar.