

New Literature – Acupuncture helps with pain management of Osteoarthritis of the knee

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This study looked at the effects of acupuncture as an adjunct to traditional pharmacological treatment of osteoarthritis in the knee. Osteoarthritis is a very common condition that affects a large number of the athletic and elderly population. It represents “wear and tear” of joints that is characterized by degenerative changes in joint cartilage that leads to inflammatory responses and pain. Common symptoms include loss of motion, pain, stiffness, and joint crepitus (grinding noise).

The most commonly prescribed medical treatment includes the use of NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory) such as celebrex, bextra, and the recently ‘pulled’ vioxx. Other common therapies include manual treatments such as joint mobilizations, soft tissue treatment, electric modalities, exercise, nutritional supplementation, and acupuncture. Due to the recent press on the dangers of anti-inflammatory medication, there is a push to find alternative therapies to replace, or complement the medication.

This study compared the effect of the more traditional treatment (NSAIDs) with and without the inclusion of acupuncture in a randomized controlled trial (the highest level of literature). The group that included acupuncture treatment was found to have a significant improvement in pain, stiffness, physical function, and quality of life versus those who only received the medication.

This study provides very promising results for at least *including* acupuncture in the treatment of osteoarthritis. Acupuncture treatment involves the placement of very thin needles into areas of the body to modulate (alter) the pain signal and to regulate the function of muscles, joints, and nerves. There may be a very minimal amount of discomfort involved upon inserting the needles, however this discomfort subsides momentarily. Electrodes may also be attached to the needles once they are inserted to send a mild electrical impulse into the tissue that has been shown to dramatically increase the pain relieving mechanism of acupuncture.

