

Acupuncture and Autism

Studies have shown that there is an increase in the number of children that have been diagnosed with autism. Until now, doctors have not yet found a cure to this illness which is why some parents want to experiment with alternative forms of treatment and one example is acupuncture.

Acupuncture is a holistic approach in treating and preventing certain diseases. Its main tool are very thin needles that are inserted to targeted points in the body. The body has about 400 of them linked through a system known as meridians or pathways. Once these are stimulated, these are supposed to create balance in the body.

Autism on the other hand is a brain disorder that is long term. This disease is characterized by deficits in language, social communication and cognition. Children who are diagnosed with this illness may also suffer from secondary problems such as aggression, irritability, stereotypes, hyperactivity, negativism, volatile emotions, temper tantrums, short attention span and obsessive-compulsive behavior.

Preliminary studies have shown that acupuncture may provide symptomatic relief to children suffering from autism. Although difficult at first, it is believed that it is rewarding in the long run. This is because while conventional therapy and treatment requires that the child stay still, acupuncture doesn't. Some say it's a quick prick at the vital points in the body.

A group of children in the US participated in a test to see how effective acupuncture is among children. There are 22 respondents and each of them was given the treatment once every other day for four months.

After the treatment 20 out of the 22 respondents showed remarkable improvement. In fact 2 of them has cerebral blood flow. The only thing that did not change prior to treatment and after was the blood flow between the left and right cerebrum as it showed no differences.

Aside from traditional acupuncture to help children with autism, a preliminary study in Hong Kong is trying to see if tongue acupuncture can produce better results.

Results have showed that of 30 respondents in the test, majority showed functional improvement of various degrees depending on the age and severity of their disabilities. Some improvement was noticeable within a few TAC sessions, especially for drooling, spasticity (scissoring or tiptoeing), ataxia, and poor

balance in walking. Functional improvement was noted after one to two courses of TAC. Most children tolerated TAC well, with only occasional pain and minor bleeding in some patients.

The reason why tongue acupuncture is being experimented with is because there is a connection between the tongue and the heart through the meridians that spread to all the organs in the body. It is believed that the points on the tongue can influence the state of the other body organs thus giving relief to the one suffering from autism.

But many believe that acupuncture alone cannot help autism sufferers. It has to be combined with other things like maintaining a certain diet to help improve one's mood and communication skills. Although it is only short term, it is better than nothing until a cure is found.

When will the cure be found? Only time can tell as there are many other questions that have to be answered in order for doctors to further understand neurological disabilities. Doctors who are conducting research believe that an interdisciplinary approach is needed given that acupuncture has shown positive results in helping children with autism.