



ACUPUNCTURE

Unveiling Hope: How Acupuncture Transformed One MS Patient's Journey

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Acupuncture, often viewed skeptically by those entrenched in Western medicine, can present a daunting prospect for patients unaccustomed to its therapeutic benefits. For individuals like my patient who was diagnosed with secondary progressive multiple sclerosis (SPSS) over 17 years ago, embracing alternative treatments became a lifeline in her journey toward healing.

Navigating New Paths

Despite discouraging prognoses from traditional medical practitioners, this patient chose to explore various avenues of treatment beyond conventional Western medicine. "There is no cure, you will have this until you die," said the patient's Western doctor. Fortunately for her, she was determined to not let MS become her life story.

She started prioritizing diet, nutrition, and exercise, and she defied expectations and maintained a positive outlook, refusing to succumb to the limitations imposed by her diagnosis.

Discovering Acupuncture

Nearly 16 years after her initial diagnosis, this patient's path led her to acupuncture. Initially, she sought acupuncture for stress relief and later realized it could be used to help manage her MS-related symptoms.

At the Phoenix Institute of Herbal Medicine & Acupuncture (PIHMA), she embarked on a transformative journey, experiencing remarkable improvements in mobility, sensation, and overall well-being through regular acupuncture sessions.

Treatments began in July with a focus on liver *qi* stagnation and spleen *qi* deficiency with heat and damp accumulation. These symptomatic patterns of disharmony were seen on exam as we progressed through each treatment. Acupuncture points were selected to address her personal

presentation of these patterns.

Scalp Treatments

A pivotal change that occurred in my patient's acupuncture journey came with the introduction of scalp treatments in December. These FMSA treatments (Foot Motor Sensory Area)¹ elicited profound change in her condition. She noticed significant enhancements in mobility, reduced sensitivity to needles, and a newfound sense of balance and stability, much to her astonishment.

During the treatments, my patient and I discussed the process: how she was not afraid, but expressed the unique sensations when I rotated the needles (200 times, three times a session), and the astonishing quick response her body had to the treatment. We were both pleased to note that her initial spasticity in her lower extremities had diminished considerably with this added treatment phase, and it is not noticeable during treatments.

Witnessing her condition before (the patient could barely tolerate touch, leg drop issues and placement of needles was difficult) and after (she is calm, relaxed and having minimal if any reactions) is rewarding and exciting to see.

As part of a teaching college, PIHMA students are given the opportunity to learn these new techniques.¹ This experience was a highlight for the group of students, as the individual experiencing these treatments was agreeable to sharing her story and background to further demonstrate the importance of trying the "out of the box" alternatives.

Not only was the patient able to experience improvement, but the clinicians were also able to review and discuss this case student as a group, further expanding their knowledge and understanding of autoimmune treatments and chronic diseases.

Closing Reflections

This patient's journey underscores the transformative power of acupuncture in navigating autoimmune conditions. It is important to recognize the patient's part in her treatment and wellness. While they may be apprehensive at first, patients should be encouraged to embrace alternative treatments, recognizing the potential for profound healing and improved quality of life.

Through acupuncture, my patient has found solace, resilience, and a renewed sense of vitality, embodying the potential for holistic healing in the face of adversity.

As this patient continues to thrive, her story serves as a testament to the efficacy of acupuncture in transforming lives and defying conventional medical wisdom. With each session, this patient embarks on a journey of self-discovery and empowerment, embracing the healing potential of acupuncture with unwavering optimism and gratitude.

Author's Note: Sincere thanks to Juliette McCaffrey for her contributions. At the time of this writing, Juliette was a PA-certified; third-year student intern in the Doctorate of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine program at PIHMA. She was the treating clinician for this patient, working under the direction of her licensed acupuncturist at the clinic.

Reference

1. Hao JJ, Hao LL. Review of clinical applications of scalp acupuncture for paralysis: an excerpt from Chinese scalp acupuncture. *Glob Adv Health Med*, 2012 Mar;1(1):102-21.

AUGUST 2024

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