

National Conferences Highlight Role of Acupuncture

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Two conferences held in Boston in November featured acupuncture in a number of contexts, as well as in a variety of innovative ways. The 134th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association (APHA) and the 3rd International Conference of the Society for Integrative Oncology (SIO) showcased a spectrum of acupuncture-related activities - presentations, demonstrations, and reports about clinical studies.

The clinical versatility, broad applicability and focus on wellness that are integral to the practice of acupuncture have contributed to its widespread use. As more communities in the U.S. have the ability to access services, the possibilities of collaboration and integration have become reality. Presentations at both of these conferences were noteworthy for providing examples of the breadth and depth of acupuncture's integration into the health care system.

Over 12,000 delegates attended the APHA's conference, themed "Public Health and Human Rights." Attendees represented all areas of public health, including alternative and complementary health practices. Approximately 30 presentations were given on a variety of integrative approaches. Acupuncture and herbal medicine were well-represented through oral presentations and poster sessions. Poster sessions included:

- Evelyn Ho and colleagues from San Francisco who described results of using acupuncture and massage for individuals with HIV-related neuropathy.
- Junling Wang from the University of Tennessee discussed the focus on wellness in Traditional Chinese Medicine.

An entire session was dedicated to acupuncture. Sabrina Volpone from the University of North Texas gave a presentation titled "Self-Efficacy, Self-Esteem, and Acupuncture Use and Their Relationship to Mental Health in HIV+ Adults." Bei-Hun Chang from Boston University School of Public Health described the results of a unique study funded by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. The study examined the enhanced effects of relaxation on quality of life in persons with HIV/AIDS who were receiving acupuncture. Carla Wilson from Quan Yin Healing Arts Center in San Francisco discussed the Living with Hepatitis C Project. Beth Sommers, from the Pathways to Wellness organization in Boston, reported on a health economics study that evaluated the cost-effectiveness of acupuncture in promoting adherence to HIV medications. Dawn Upchurch of UCLA described a study on acupuncturists' agreement on diagnosis and treatment for women with hot flashes. Elizabeth Dean-Clower of Boston's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute discussed the role of acupuncture in managing symptoms and improving quality of life.

For the first two days of the conference, volunteer acupuncturists and body-workers provided sample

sessions to attendees; delegates received the sessions at the Alternative and Complementary Health Practices' information booth in Exposition Hall. For the past few years, these types of sessions have been well-received at APHA meetings and have proven to be an excellent way to connect the practice of acupuncture with the larger public health setting.

Barbara Parton, a Boston-based acupuncturist and nurse, helped to organize practitioners, with the help of Karlo Berger and Boston's Integrative Medical Alliance. More than 20 providers responded to the call for volunteers. Networking, outreach and the cross-pollination of perspectives and ideas flourished at the sessions, and the service provided was clearly appreciated by hundreds of conference attendees.

Presentations at the Society of Integrative Oncology conference featured a variety of approaches used in hospitals and cancer outpatient treatment centers. In addition to acupuncture, workshops were offered on the use of massage therapy, music therapy and botanical medicines.

Preliminary reports were given on using acupuncture in pediatric oncology (D. Rooney and colleagues). Treatment was acceptable for children as young as 1 year of age and was safely administered even to children with thrombocytopenia. Researchers at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute (Weidong Lu and colleagues) described an NIH-funded ongoing trial using acupuncture to mitigate chemotherapy-induced neutropenia. J. Capodice and colleagues from Columbia University and the Mailman School of Public Health presented results from a prospective pilot study on relief of musculoskeletal symptoms related to use of aromatase inhibitors by women following treatment for breast cancer. Treatment resulted in significant improvement in pain and physical well-being.

Sanghoon Lee and Adrian Dobs, of the Johns Hopkins Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, advocated using individualized treatment approaches, versus standardized protocols, for studies. Andrew Vickers and colleagues from Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center described their experience in conducting a trial using acupuncture for pancreatic cancer pain.

The oncology program at Massachusetts General Hospital was represented by Irene Martyniuk and colleagues, who discussed how acupuncture services are integrated into chemotherapy infusion treatments. Martyniuk provided *Acupuncture Today* with her response and perspectives about the conference:

"It's clear that acupuncture has become more integrated into some of the most prestigious cancer centers throughout the country. Patients are expecting access to acupuncture and other complementary approaches, and more oncologists are taking these requests seriously. We're seeing more clinical services being offered, as well as the development of research opportunities."

In both of these high-profile conferences, it was impressive to witness the multi-disciplinary team approaches that acupuncturists have helped to create. Both Western allopathic providers and Asian medicine specialists are fashioning a new common language and ways of communicating; developing these channels can facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise that can benefit patients.

Health care that truly is integrative can be provided in a variety of settings to deal with a myriad of conditions and diagnoses. No single "cookie-cutter" approach to integration exists, and services that include complementary and alternative components can be found in a variety of formats and clinical settings. The revolution currently happening in health care definitely includes acupuncture and Asian medicine, and the public's health and well-being stand to benefit.

For further information on the presentations featured at the two conferences, interested readers can go to the Web site of each organization: www.apha.org and www.integrativeonc.org.

Presentation From the SIO: Integrating Acupuncture Services Into an Infusion Clinic

Submitted by KD Binda, I Martyniuk, E Sommers, J Lafrancesca

The cancer center at Massachusetts General Hospital initiated a pilot project to offer auricular acupuncture to patients during their chemotherapy infusion treatments. The infusion unit primarily treats individuals diagnosed with breast or ovarian cancers, as well as lymphoma. Outpatients receive treatment while sitting in a large, comfortable, reclining chair in an open area, while inpatients are treated in their hospital room.

Although the primary focus of treatment has been to help individuals relax during the infusion process, patients also request treatment for stress, anxiety, fear or irritability. Besides providing acupuncture treatment, the acupuncturist provides education for patients and caregivers, teaching them how to use acupressure points for nausea. Short sessions of *Tui-na* are provided if patients were needle-phobic or medical staff felt that contraindications such as thrombocytopenia were present.

Medical staff has been very supportive of the project and often refers patients, facilitating introductions and ease of treatment; they also have observed the acupuncturist's practice and the benefits experienced by patients and families. A sense of multidisciplinary collaboration has grown throughout the project.

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