

VETERINARY ACUPUNCTURE: INDICATION & ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE CONTRAINDICATION

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Veterinary acupuncture has been practiced in China for at least 2,000 years. Interest and activity spread to other Asian countries including Japan and Korea about 1,500 years ago. During the past 25 to 30 years, there has been tremendous growth and development of veterinary acupuncture in Europe and the United States. Acupuncture has been used for treatment of diseases in horses, cattle, dogs, cats, and birds. The results of many clinical studies have documented the benefits provided to acupuncture patients.^{3,4,5,6}

Acupuncture clinical results vary according to the disorder being treated and with the type of acupuncture technique employed. Thus, the goal of this paper is to highlight the indications and caution the contraindications in veterinary acupuncture.

What is Acupuncture? Acupuncture Model

Acupuncture may be defined as the stimulation of a specific point on the body referred to as an “acupoint.” Physiological changes in response to acupuncture point stimulation is the basis of clinical treatment. Some of these include release of endogenous opioids, immune system stimulation, blood pressure regulation, and body temperature regulation. Thus, many techniques have been developed to stimulate “acupoints” such as dry-needle, moxibustion, electro-acupuncture, aqua-acupuncture, hemo-acupuncture, acu-pressure, and pneumo-acupuncture.

Body

Pain relief

Release beta-endorphin

Needle Acupoint

Increase in WBC titer of antibody T cell

Physiological Changes

Treatment of immune-deficiency

Applications in Veterinary Acupuncture

Acupuncture can be used for a variety of clinical conditions, especially chronic diseases. The following are three areas in which acupuncture is most commonly used: 1) pain management, 2) geriatric medicine, and 3) sports medicine.

1. Acupuncture pain management.

Acupuncture has been reported to be effective for treatment of various pain producing conditions including cervical, thoraco-lumbar and lumbo-sacral hyperpathia; chronic lameness; degenerative joint diseases; and colic

2-7 Acupuncture stimulation has been found to produce an analgesic effect, generally called acupuncture analgesia (AA).⁸ The release of -endorphin may be one of the pathways in which acupuncture relieves beta pain.

⁹⁻¹⁰The UCLA acupuncture research project found that different types of acupuncture were effective for pain relief of various orthopedic, obstetric, and surgical procedures, as well as treatment of chronic pain, sensorineural hearing loss, compulsive disorders such as obesity and tobacco and drug addiction, and bronchial asthma in humans. In other studies conducted on both humans and dogs, acupuncture was found to be beneficial in cases in which surgery was not recommended, and in cases where analgesics and anti-inflammatory medications had demonstrated side effects or had been ineffective.

1) Cervical pain and wobbler’s syndrome: GB-20/21, SI-3, LI-4, BL-10, BL-62, LI-16/17/18

2) Intervertebrae disc diseases and back pain: BL-23/26/40/60/67, LIV-3, BL-10/11, Bai-hui

3) Degenerative joint disease and arthritis: BL-11/23/26/60, KID-3/7/10, GB-34/39

4) Laminitis/navicular disease: TH-1/15, Qi-ti-men, PC-9, LU-11, LI-1, SI-3/9, BL-11, GB-21

5) Colic and abdominal pain: Jiang-ya, TH-1, Dai-mai, ST-2, BL-21/25, ST-36, LIV-3

6) Post-operative pain management: Bai-hui, SI-9, TH-9, LI-4, GB-34, LIV-3

7) ‘Tying up’: BL-18/19, BL-21/22, BL-23/26, BL-40, BL-67, LIV-1, GB-21/44

2. Geriatric medicine

- 1) DJD, hip dysplasia, IVDD: BL-11/23/40/60, Bai-hui, Hua-tuo-jia-ji
- 2) Chronic renal failure: BL-23, KID-3/7/10, BL-21, ST-36, Shan-gen
- 3) Congested heart failure: BL-14, BL-15, HT-7, An-shen
- 4) Oncological disease: ST-36, LI-4/10/11, GV-14
- 5) Chronic GI disorders and IBD: ST-36, GB-34, BL-20/21, Wei-jian
- 6) Immune-mediated disease and dermatological problems: GB-20, Da-feng-men, BL-17, SP-10, LI-4, ST-36, GV-14
- 7) Infertility: Yan-chi, BL-23/52/26, GV-1, Bai-hui
- 8) Seizure disorders: GB-20, LIV-3, GV-1, BL-18
- 9) General weakness: KID-1, PC-8, LI-10, ST-36, GB-34
- 10) Vestibular diseases, degenerative myelopathy: Da-feng-men, Tian-men, GV-14, Wei-jian, Bai-hui

3. Sports medicine

- 1) Evaluation of lameness: LI-18 for hoof pain; BL-54, Lu-gu and GB-29 for coxo-femoral soreness
- 2) Treatment of musculo-skeletal soreness: Local points + BL-21, BL-40, LIV-1, ST-45, TH-1
- 3) Enhancement of performance: BL-21, BL-26, Qi-hai-shu, Yan-chi, Dan-tian

As compared with other modalities of therapy, acupuncture is much safer because of dual-direction regulation. This means that when an acupoint is stimulated, the physiological response will be according to the body's need. For instance, GV-26 is an excellent point to be used in a patient experiencing cardiovascular shock because it raises blood pressure, respiratory rate, and heart rate. However, the same point GV-26 is often used in cases of hypertension, where the physiological response is to lower blood pressure. Yet another example of dual-direction regulation can be demonstrated through the use of two acupoints (BL-21, GV-1). These two points address gastrointestinal motility and are used either for the patient who is constipated or another who has diarrhea.

What is the Legal Status to Perform Acupuncture?

In most states only licensed veterinarians may perform acupuncture, except for Maryland. Before engaging in the practice of acupuncture, successful completion of a certified veterinary acupuncture training course is highly recommended. Institutions which offer veterinary acupuncture training programs include 1) the Chi Institute, 2) Colorado State University (CSU), 3) IVAS, and 4) Tufts University.

Institutions Contact information

Chi Institute
 9700 West Hwy 318
 Reddick, FL 32686
<http://www.tcvn.com/>
 Tel: 1-800-891-1986; Fax: 352-591-2854

CSU
 105 Equine Center,
 Fort Collins, CO 80523-1679
 Tel: 970-491-8509, Fax: 970-491-8419

IVAS
 2625 Redwing Road, Suite 160
 Fort Collins, CO 80526 www.ivas.org
 Tel: 970-266-0666; Fax: 970-266-0777

Tufts
 200 Westboro Road
 North Grafton, Massachusetts 01536
 Tel: 508-839-5302

Contraindication and Cautions

1. Contraindication

- 1) Never needle directly into a tumor or open wound.
- 2) Never needle CV-8. Only moxibustion is used at CV-8.
- 3) Never use the following acupoints during pregnancy: ST-36, SP-6, BL-40, BL-60 and BL-67, as well as points around the lumbar and lower abdominal region.
- 4) Never use electro-acupuncture for seizure patients.
- 5) Never use hemo-acupuncture for weak or elderly patients.

2. Cautions

- 1) Use fewer acupoints for weak or elder animals.
- 2) Wait a couple of hours after training/racing before a treatment session.
- 3) Acupoints around the thoracic cavity, such as BL-13 to BL-17, require shorter insertion of needles.
- 4) Be cautious when using Moxibustion in summer time.
- 5) Be cautious when using hemo-acupuncture in winter time.
- 6) Be cautious when using points around the eyes.
- 7) Be cautious when using electro-acupuncture in patients with pacemakers.

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