Acupuncture in the Treatment of Alzheimer’s

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Acupuncture for Alzheimer’s

If a treatment is proven to improve memory and prevent the degeneration of brain tissue, could it also help patients suffering from Alzheimer’s disease?

The answer is yes; according to the results of one study on electro-acupuncture for Alzheimer’s patients.

You may be surprised to learn that only one acupuncture point was used in this study; this point is called GV 20. GV 20 stands for Governing Vessel 20, and the point is located on top of the head in the middle on a horizontal line that extends from behind each ear and upward. It’s approximately one finger width behind the center of the head. This point is stimulated to inspire open-mindedness and curiosity.

One disclaimer; the Alzheimer’s patients in this study were mice. Nevertheless, the acupuncture stimulation resulted in a decrease in the formation of plaque deposits, which cause memory loss and dementia. It ameliorated the damage already done by the disease in the small mouse brains.

The most exciting part of the study was that the acupuncture treatments created more stem cells in the nervous system.

Which Points were tested in the Study?

In another Alzheimer disease study, this one using humans, researchers found that two acupuncture points – LV 3 and LI 4 – when stimulated, increased connections of the cells in the hippocampus.

Liver 3 (LV 3)

This point is on the top of the foot. From the web found between the big toe and the second toe, move your finger up about a thumb’s width to reach a natural depression.

Large Intestine 4 (called ‘Joining Valley’)

This point is on the back of the hand, between the first and second metacarpal bones of the hand. Specifically, it’s in the middle of the second metacarpal bone, on the thumb side.

The hippocampus is the center of the emotions in the brain, and is important in memory and geo-location. Alzheimer’s patients usually display confusion, memory loss, and often forget where they live and who their relatives are. However, if the cells can regain their connections with each other in this area of the brain, it is conceivable have a reversal of symptoms.

First, researchers discovered which parts of the brain these Alzheimer’s patients had disruptions in, via MRI.

After the acupuncture treatments, there was increased activity in the lateral temporal and frontal parts of the hippocampus. It was obvious to researchers that the acupuncture had stimulated circulation in these areas of the brain. The results were sustained over time.

These studies provide immense hope for patients with dementia. Estimates from the Rush Institute for Healthy Aging in Chicago indicate that in 2010, 4.7 million people over the age of sixty-five had Alzheimer's disease. By 2050, that number is estimated to be 13.8 million. It is prudent to learn about these acupuncture points as soon as possible.