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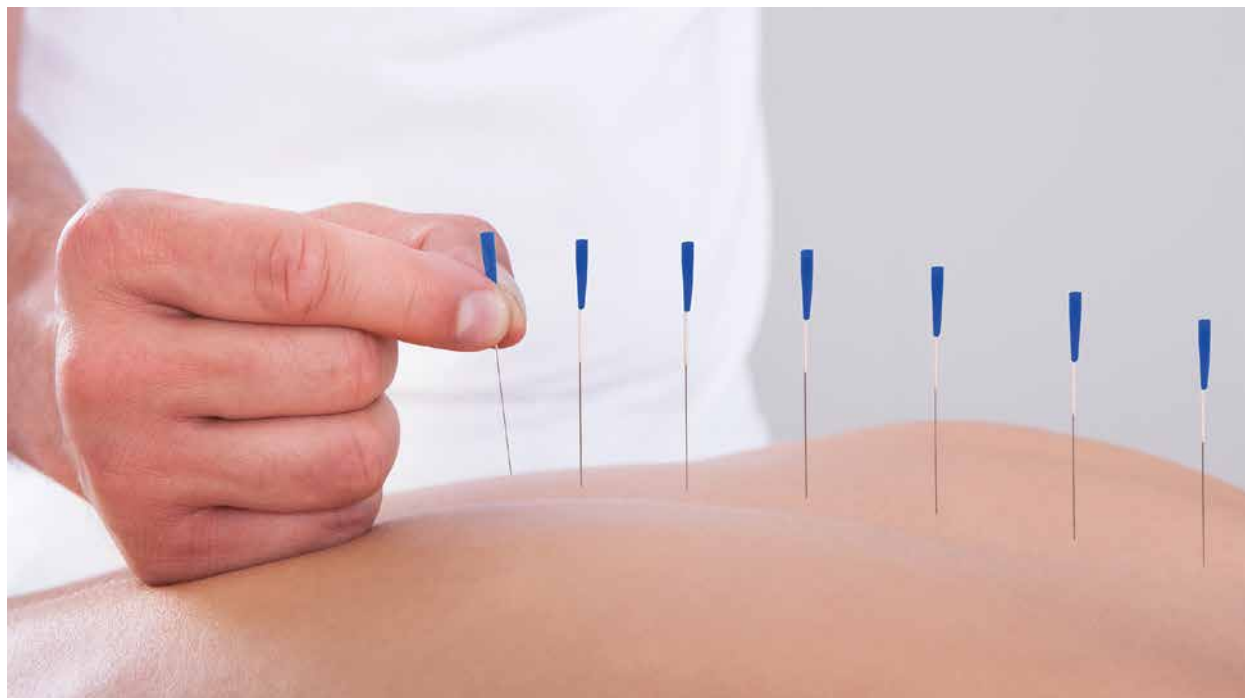
Vero Beach Magazine®

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*Local professionals step out of the office
and into the ocean for a different kind of*

Board Meeting





Pinpointing Pain

THE ANCIENT PRACTICE OF ACUPUNCTURE
MAY OFFER BENEFITS FOR MODERN-DAY PATIENTS

Acupuncture might not be for everyone; but those who've tried it tend to "stick" with it.

Lee Dinenberg is one of them. Years of playing sports, including college football and lacrosse, and working in the roofing industry have taken a toll on Dinenberg's 47-year-old body. When he sought medical attention for extreme pain and weakness in his right elbow, an orthopedic surgeon recommended surgery. Rather than rush to the operating table, Dinenberg decided to try acupuncture at the

suggestion of another orthopedic surgeon, who also happens to be a childhood friend.

"I routinely recommend alternative treatments and nonoperative modalities prior to surgery in cases that are not life- or limb-threatening," explains Dr. Jonathan Schiller, associate professor of orthopedic surgery and director of the Adolescent and Young Adult Hip Service at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. "Acupuncture is one of many nonoperative treatments I suggest because it's been

shown to be effective. If it doesn't hurt you and it's alleviating your symptoms, acupuncture can be a low risk-high reward alternative to surgery."

"I have an open mind," says Dinenberg. "I'd never had acupuncture, but I thought I'd give it a try based on Jonathan's recommendation."

A Google search of Vero Beach-based acupuncturists led Dinenberg to Kate Hoffmann, nationally certified acupuncturist and owner of Vero Acupuncture. "Kate treated my elbow twice a week for four weeks,

then once a week for three weeks," explains Dinenberg. "I went from not being able to hold an empty paper cup to having total function of my elbow. That was a year ago, and I've had no pain since then. I can hold a roofing gun and go to the gym and do push-ups and pull-ups with no problem."

Following his favorable outcome, Dinenberg returned to Hoffmann for treatment of shoulder, hip, and general joint pain. "I was told I needed a hip replacement because I had minimal cartilage and the ball of my hip joint was completely flat," he says. "It hurt so much to walk; I'd use the Publix shopping cart as if it were a walker when grocery shopping. After acupuncture treatment every two weeks, I've never had anything close to that kind of pain again. It's amazing. My body's taken more abuse than the average person's, and acupuncture keeps me upright."

Seventy-six-year-old Jack Craven of Vero Beach has also become a proponent of acupuncture after just two treatments with Hoffmann for back pain. "I've always been proactive about my health," says Craven, an avid pickleball player.

In addition to ice, heat, physical ther-

apy, massage, and an occasional cortisone shot, Craven considers acupuncture to be another viable avenue to explore when it comes to maintaining an active, healthy lifestyle. "If my pain resurfaces, I wouldn't hesitate to go back for treatment," he says. "I had a positive experience."

Originating in China more than 3,000 years ago, acupuncture is one of the oldest and most-used procedures in the world; it has been embraced by many who want to alleviate symptoms of arthritis, migraines, chemotherapy treatment, and a variety of other conditions, including stress and addiction.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture balances the flow of chi, or life energy, circulating through pathways called meridians in the body. Meridians feed vital energy to the body's cells, tissues, muscles, organs, and glands. Physi-

cal and psychological stressors affect those meridians and organ systems, disrupting the flow of energy and weakening the body's self-healing abilities. Over time, the body becomes more susceptible to pain, disease, stress, anxiety, and poor health because of this disruption. By stimulating specific points along the meridians, acupuncture practitioners believe they can rebalance the flow of chi and facilitate the body's natural ability to heal.

"Imagine a kink in a garden hose," says Hoffmann, who has practiced acupuncture and holistic medicine modalities for over 20 years. "If the water flow is disrupted, it cannot provide adequate water supply to a plant and the plant will not thrive. Acupuncture helps open the kinks in the body's energy pathways. I am not the healer," she is quick to point out. "I give you back the ability to heal yourself."

Conversely, many

Western practitioners understand acupuncture points in terms of their relationship to nerves, muscles, and connective tissue. Some believe that stimulation at certain locations causes the brain to release endorphins (the body's natural painkillers), which make people feel better physically and emotionally.

Despite numerous studies, the full picture of acupuncture's effectiveness can be challenging to assess. It does indeed seem to yield positive results in patients suffering from chronic pain of various types, but the role of mental expectation in these situations, one might say the "placebo effect," is difficult to quantify.

Hoffmann refutes the notion that the benefits of acupuncture are attributable to the placebo effect, citing acupuncture's ability to treat animals. "Dogs, cats, and horses don't think putting needles in them is a good idea, but it is proven to help them," she points out. "Show me anything that's been around for 3,000 years that doesn't work!"

Because acupuncture brings with it relatively few risks or potential complications when performed by a qualified practitioner, even conventional medical providers often consider it to be

DID YOU KNOW?

There are an estimated 33,000
licensed or certified acupuncturists
in the United States.



BY RENÉE TESAURO

“I went from not being able to hold an empty paper cup to having total function of my elbow.”

— LEE DINENBERG

“worth a try.” In recent years, many hospitals have begun integrating acupuncture and other alternative medicine modalities as complementary therapies alongside conventional treatments.

As acupuncture becomes more integrated into mainstream medicine, health insurers are becoming increasingly amenable to covering it as a treatment for chronic pain and other symptoms. In 2020, Medicare began to cover acupuncture for chronic lower back pain.

If you decide to try acupuncture, here’s what you can expect:

Prior to the initial visit, the acupuncturist will typically gather information about your medical history, present health, lifestyle, and emotional state. During the visit, he or she will assess your general appearance and may examine the color, shape, and size of your tongue, which can provide vital clues about your internal health. The acupuncturist will palpate specific acupuncture points to evaluate imbalances and check the strength and rhythm of the pulse in your wrist.

Acupuncture treat-

ments involve the insertion of fine, sterile stainless steel needles of varying lengths into specific areas of the skin. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved acupuncture needles for use by licensed practitioners and requires all acupuncturists to follow strict safety guidelines.

If getting a vaccination makes you queasy, take heart! The average diameter of an acupuncture needle is about 10 times smaller than an average hypodermic needle and just twice

the diameter of a human hair. Insertion causes little discomfort and is often not felt at all.

Once the needles are inserted, some patients may feel a mild tingling or a dull ache. Others may experience the sensation of energy moving around the needle, along with a sense of relaxation. Depending upon the condition being treated, the acupuncturist may insert as few as three needles or as many as 20 in various areas of the body—typically arms, legs, hands, feet, or ears. Acupuncture points are situated in

many parts of the body, and in some cases the point of treatment is far removed from the location of the pain. Some practitioners might twirl, heat, or electrically stimulate the needles to intensify the healing effect.

Patients lie on a padded table during the treatment, wearing their own clothing or a gown, and listen to soothing music to facilitate relaxation. People often fall asleep. Sessions generally last 45 to 60 minutes, during which the acupuncturist may also apply acupressure with the hands or heat to specific areas.

While some conditions might be alleviated with only a few treatments, others may require weekly or monthly visits as well as a seasonal tune-up.

Side effects are rare, but can include soreness, minor bruising, or bleeding where the needles were inserted. Single-use disposable needles are standard practice, so infection is highly unlikely. You could be at risk for complications, however, if you are pregnant, have a pacemaker, have a bleeding disorder, or take blood thinners.



Nationally certified acupuncturist Kate Hoffmann has been practicing alternative healing since 1991.



Lee Dinenberg is being treated by Kate Hoffmann for chronic hip pain. The needles for this treatment are placed in his left hand and ear, as well as his right foot. The goal of his treatment is to keep him from hip replacement surgery for as long as possible.

“There are so many misconceptions about acupuncture,” observes Patta Conboy, former manager of BG Equestrian and longtime advocate of homeopathic medicine and, more recently, acupuncture. Ten years ago, she was told she needed surgery to correct a shoulder impingement that prevented her from lifting hay bales or saddling a horse. After just a few acupuncture treatments with Dr. Danny Quaranto, founder of Alternative Medicine Family Care Center in Vero Beach, she hasn’t had a problem since.

“There is a high level of awareness in Vero Beach that alternative medicine is a viable option for health care,” suggests Quaranto, who holds a medical degree

from the University of Science, Arts and Technology on the island of Montserrat in the British West Indies. He also received training in China and has been practicing traditional Chinese medicine, classical homeopathy, and acupuncture since 1986.

He adds, “Over the years many people have asked me, ‘When I’m having a problem, how do I know if I need to see you or my conventional doctor?’ Always explore the least invasive form of medicine first. If your condition warrants more heroic measures, you will be referred to an appropriate health care provider.” According to his medical philosophy, “If you don’t have to call 911, then call us.” ☯

BEFORE YOU “STICK IT” TO PAIN:

- ✓ Ask your health care provider, trusted friends, or family members if they can recommend an acupuncturist near you.
- ✓ Look at the practitioner’s credentials. Most states, including Florida, require a license to practice acupuncture. Refer to the Florida Board of Acupuncture, floridasacupuncture.gov, for licensing requirements.
- ✓ Interview the acupuncturist. Ask about the treatment plan, the cost, and the likelihood it will help your condition.
- ✓ Find out if your insurance provider covers the treatment.