



Acupuncture for Animals

Origins of Acupuncture

Acupuncture is one part of a larger medical system called Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Its origins predate written history but may have started with the use of sharp stone instruments during the Neolithic period. The first recognizable acupuncture needles appear during the Bronze Age, along with the first Chinese writing. As iron replaced bronze and China entered its “Hundred Schools of Thought” era, great advances in philosophy and medicine emerged and the earliest medical texts based on natural observation and scientific enquiry were written. The first text to fully elucidate Chinese medical theory was the Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic, written or compiled around the 2nd century B.C., which features the first recorded understanding of the circulation of blood. This text continues to serve as the foundation of TCM.

Rivers of Qi

Acupuncture and TCM rely on the concept of Qi, commonly translated as energy but perhaps best understood as the patterns of form and function in all possible permutations. Qi that is heavy and dense is called yin; Qi that is light and rarified is called yang. Other yin qualities are dark, cold, inner, lower and passive; other yang qualities are light, hot, outer, upper and active. Rather than being absolute opposing forces, yin and yang are relative polarities. In an ever-changing universe yin and yang transform into each other as depicted in the circular Taiji symbol. The phases of this ongoing co-creative transformation are described by the Five Phases: wood, fire, earth, metal and water. All things and events corresponding to a particular phase are related by their qualities and tendencies on both a macrocosmic and microcosmic level. For example, the wood phase is associated with the season Spring, the color green, the climatic condition wind, the visual sense and the liver organ; thus seizures, related functionally to wind (the body behaving as if wind were blowing it about), are commonly treated via the liver. (Chinese organs are understood differently than their Western counterparts.) Qi related to the organs and their functions is said to flow in its more rarified form along rivers of bioenergy called meridians. Each organ has an associated pair of meridians running bilaterally along the body’s surface and extending internally. Points along these meridians where the Qi is most easily influenced are used for needling. Modern theory postulates that the metal needles (particularly ones using two metals such as copper and steel) alter the body’s electromagnetic field and charge distribution along these rivers.

Treatments

Acupuncture is typically performed at weekly intervals until improvement is seen, which may take one to five sessions, and then gradually reduced to the lowest necessary interval. Acute ailments tend to respond faster than chronic ones, requiring fewer total sessions. The needles are very fine, and insertion is tolerated quite well by animals. Needles are left in place for five to twenty minutes depending on the patient, their condition, and the points being used. On rare occasions a patient may feel temporarily worse, followed by recovery within a day or two. Most are simply either very relaxed or more energetic after acupuncture.

Feel free to ask us for more information on TCM. We look forward to helping your furry friend!

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