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The Modalities of Acupuncture

By John Amaro, LAc, Dipl. Ac. (NCCAOM), FIAMA, DC

Perhaps two of the most frequently asked questions about the practice of acupuncture is simply put, "Do the needles hurt?" and "Are there any other ways to perform the procedure?"

To the first question, "yes" and "no." The needles generally create a mosquito bite sensation when inserted and will produce a noticeable discomfort when "teh chi" is achieved. This sensation should accompany all needle insertions as achieving "teh chi" is the goal of a properly placed and stimulated needle. Even though the actual insertion of a needle is certainly not painful, the sensation of "teh chi" can be quite uncomfortable.

To the second question, "Are there any other ways to perform the procedure without the use of needles?" A firm and definite "yes" is in order.

As I have pointed out throughout this column, needles are one of many forms of acupuncture, generally referred to as meridian therapy when needles are not employed; nonetheless, stimulation of the acupoint (reflex point) may be successfully carried out by a variety of means.

The critics say "no way" but practitioners who have employed alternative methods know all too well the marvelous results obtained by non-penetrating modalities. Even though I will be the first to agree that by and large needles are perhaps the highest form of acupuncture, the non-piercing methods run a very close second and in some cases, equal response to the needle.

The most common forms of stimulation in order of response are he/ne laser or light-emitting diode red-light stimulation, electronic stimulation, and teishin.

One of my favorite forms of non-invasive stimulation is, and has always been, the "pressure needles" (teishin). This device is simply struck on the patient's skin with 20-25 light tapping strokes. It is one of the nine ancient forms of acupuncture and is still employed with much enthusiasm in hospitals, clinics, and institutes around the world. In personal treatment of myself, I usually find myself using the teishin more

often than any other modality.

Laser or more recently red light-emitting diode has received considerable attention internationally and is being used in some of the most noticeable institutes in the People's Republic of China as well as the majority of the Eastern bloc nations, Europe, Soviet Union, and America.

Interestingly enough, it is now being discovered there is not something magical about the laser that produces the incredible results but that it operates in the red spectral range. Serious research is under way to establish the relationship between red light and the functioning of the human body.

Electronic stimulation runs from microstimulation to milliamp stimulation, with both camps absolutely positive their form is the best. Frankly, in my 20 years of practice, I have had outstanding results with both forms of electronic stimulation. The dye-in-the-wool microstimulation advocates are quick to point out microstim has no equal, but the truth be known, I have had some pretty amazing results with a car key rubbed over the point.

I am more than half way convinced stimulation is stimulation and even ballpoint pens and car keys can produce amazing results, not to mention the human touch.

In rating modalities of acupuncture, be sure you place the Activator instrument high up on the list. Many practitioners throughout the world have reported incredible results with percussion of the acupoint with Activator.

The first and most important thing in acupuncture is where to treat; how you treat is often of secondary importance.

John A. Amaro, D.C., F.I.A.C.A., DIPL.AC.

Carefree, Arizona

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