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What Conditions Does Acupuncture Treat (According to the World Health Organization)?

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In contemporary applications of acupuncture in North America, it is becoming increasingly common to hear patients complain that their insurance carrier is challenging them; acupuncture is not effective for a particular situation, according to the insurer, and therefore, coverage is being denied. Of course, it is obvious that insurance companies are in the business to minimize costs, escalate productivity and maximize profit. As a result, it is not uncommon or unlikely that our patients will be denied coverage, only because the insurance carrier has deemed acupuncture to be ineffective or an unapproved treatment.

The World Health Organization (WHO), whose authority concerning health-related matters internationally cannot be challenged, has compiled a list of symptoms, syndromes, disease processes, pathologies, traumas and conditions that have definitely been proven as effectively treated by acupuncture. The WHO has also compiled a list of diseases, symptoms and conditions for which acupuncture has shown definite therapeutic effects, but more proof is needed to establish it as a mainstream form of treatment. Should a curious patient, insurance company or colleague require proof of acupuncture's effectiveness, the following list is something you will want to keep on file. Its use is inevitable and will be invaluable.

In an official report, *Acupuncture: Review and Analysis of Reports on Controlled Clinical Trials*, the WHO lists the following symptoms, diseases and conditions that have been shown through controlled trials to be treated effectively by acupuncture:

- Low back pain
- Neck pain
- Sciatica
- Tennis elbow

- Knee pain
- Periarthritis of the shoulder
- Sprains
- Facial pain (including craniomandibular disorders)
- Headache
- Dental pain
- Temporomandibular (TMJ) dysfunction
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Induction of labor
- Correction of malposition of fetus (breech presentation)
- Morning sickness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Postoperative pain
- Stroke
- Essential hypertension
- Primary hypotension
- Renal colic
- Leucopenia
- Adverse reactions to radiation or chemotherapy
- Allergic rhinitis, including hay fever
- Biliary colic
- Depression (including depressive neurosis and depression following stroke)
- Acute bacillary dysentery
- Primary dysmenorrhea
- Acute epigastralgia
- Peptic ulcer
- Acute and chronic gastritis

The foregoing list is absolute concerning acupuncture's effectiveness; however, the report continues with three more categories (summarized due to space limitations as follows):

1. Diseases, symptoms and conditions for which the therapeutic effect of acupuncture has been shown, but further proof is needed (68 specific conditions). These conditions are effectively treated, as in the first category; it's just that more trials are necessary to establish the proof scientifically.
2. Diseases, symptoms and conditions reporting some therapeutic effects for which acupuncture is worth trying (nine conditions).
3. Diseases, symptoms and conditions for which acupuncture may be tried, provided the practitioner has special modern medical knowledge and adequate monitoring equipment (eight conditions).

Should any reader desire the complete list of conditions for which acupuncture is deemed effective, as noted in the three categories outlined immediately above, please e-mail me with your request. As healers, let's continue to effectively treat this broad range of conditions. Best wishes!

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