

# Acupuncture Makes a Good Point

Ancient art reputedly cures a variety of sicknesses

by Abby Malik, Staff Writer

Have you ever considered trying acupuncture to treat your sickness, pain or stress? Perhaps instead of reaching for an over-the-counter remedy the next time you feel a new or familiar ache, pain or other problem, you might first consider exploring acupuncture's benefits.

Kris McClanahan, M.Ac., L.Ac., is a licensed acupuncturist at Artemesia, a community acupuncture and wellness center in Lexington. Working with colleague Kathleen Fluhart, RN, M.Ac., L.Ac., McClanahan has used acupuncture to treat an array of issues, including insomnia, arthritis, menopause, allergies, hypertension, cholesterol, diabetes and more.

"My job is to really look at the heart of what's going on," McClanahan said. "I see people who come here just wanting to relieve pain."

Within the first five to 10 minutes of an acupuncture session, a patient can begin to feel a sense of relaxation, and then, bit by bit, a gradual alleviation of discomfort. Once patients experience relief, they want to know how acupuncture is achieving that relief.

"The needles restore balance," McClanahan said. "In the body, whenever there is pain, there's blockage, and acupuncture releases that blockage."

The body has roughly 425 "acupoints." Placing fine, sterile needles at these points activates the body's "Qi" (pronounced "chee"). While achieving perfect balance is impossible, McClanahan said, acupuncture helps individuals achieve what she calls "relative balance."

At Artemesia, an initial visit lasts two hours and includes talking about the patient's health history, current issues and concerns and lifestyle factors, including

diet, sleep, exercise and potential stressors. Another issue addressed is the patient's potential fear of the acupuncture needles, which are the width of a hair.

"Acupuncture is a much more pleasant experience than most people think," McClanahan said.

During treatments, patients can choose to lay on a bed or sit in a zero-gravity chair with the option of snuggling up with a blanket. McClanahan plays soft, soothing music that encourages relaxation.

For new patients, McClanahan usually suggests a treatment plan of several consecutive weekly visits, and then she will plan a phase two, if appropriate.

"We begin to work on a deeper level of what's causing pain," McClanahan said. "Someone's progress is different depending on whatever their situation is. This could have to do with other chronic illnesses they have or other medications they might be on."

Many older adults have doctors they are comfortable with and who are familiar with their health and wellness history. McClanahan works alongside doctors people are already using.

"I like to incorporate the acupuncture momentum to assist in the healing process," she said.

Although acupuncture has existed for around 3,000 years, the Chinese medicine is just beginning to be utilized on a wider basis.

"I think the reason it's taking so long is that Chinese medicine is very different from the Western approach," McClanahan said. "Western medicine treats the symptoms, while acupuncture looks at how someone's entire environment – including home, seasons, emotions, diet and mentality – might be affecting them."

A particularly timely situation as winter looms is how the change

in seasons can affect immune systems. McClanahan said doing acupuncture at certain points on the body can help people deal with these seasonal changes.

McClanahan said acupuncture can help relieve the stressful life transitions that can occur among older adults, including caring for family members, new illnesses, kids heading off to college and career stresses.

"I work a lot with individuals in these kinds of situations," she said. "Our ability to recover from stressful situations changes depending on what kinds of stress we're experiencing."

For McClanahan and Fluhart, acupuncture is a lifelong pursuit. McClanahan said she never stops

learning about the dynamic field of medicine.

"Once you decide to do this work, you realize that you're called to do it," she said.



Kris McClanahan, M.Ac., L.Ac.  
Photo by Thomas Miller.



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