

Acupuncture Research Update

"A healthy outside starts from the inside." - Robert Urich

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Acupuncture for Improving Kidney Function



A study published in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine establishes acupuncture as a feasible treatment for improving kidney function in those suffering from chronic kidney disease. The study followed 59 patients with chronic kidney disease over a twelve week period, in which they each received acupuncture treatments using the same acupuncture points plus electrostimulation. The serum creatinine levels and estimated glomerular filtration rates were monitored to determine the successfulness. The study concluded the serum creatinine levels dropped and the estimated glomerular filtration rates increased, which indicates acupuncture holds promise in the treatment of chronic kidney disease and improving overall kidney function.

<http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/acm.2016.0119>

Kidney disease is the ninth leading cause of death in the United States, with an estimated 31 million people suffering from chronic kidney disease. Decreased kidney function can be either acute or chronic. Acute kidney injury can be caused by a sudden drop in blood flow to the kidneys, damage from medications or infections. Chronic kidney damage can be caused by autoimmune diseases, genetic diseases, sexually transmitted diseases or even chronic urinary tract infections. Regardless of the cause, decreased kidney function can be deadly if not detected or left untreated.

Traditional Chinese Medicine offers multiple methods to help battle decreased kidney function. The kidneys function to filter and purify blood throughout the body. Inadequate blood flow to the kidneys can lead to a host of problems. The most prevalent form of TCM is acupuncture. Acupuncture has been shown to increase blood flow into areas that are lacking, thus allowing the transport of vital nutrients that keep the tissues healthy and functioning properly. Acupuncture can help relieve clinical symptoms of kidney disease, such as fatigue, back pain, headaches, nausea and vomiting.

According to TCM, the kidneys are the source of yin and yang. Yang is fire and yin is water. When the fire of yang is weak or the water of yin is not nourishing the body, then the kidney function must be addressed. The kidneys also house essence or jing in TCM. Jing is similar to our DNA. Since the kidneys are the most deep-seated of the internal organs, they are responsible for providing the tools to fulfill the deepest needs, such as survival and reproduction. While the kidneys house the deep reserves that fuel the body, they are also the organs damaged the most by stress. The body's bones and marrow are governed by the kidneys in TCM. So even illnesses like osteoporosis can be related to the kidneys and as such, when treating a person with these ailments, the kidney meridian must always be included in the treatments.

Regular acupuncture treatments can greatly improve the health of the kidneys and keep them strong. But it is also important to keep stress levels at a minimum. This is where things like meditation, tai chi and qi gong can come into play. All of these practices help calm the mind and relieve stress. It is also recommended that fear be avoided, as it can deplete the energy of the kidney meridian. Physically, the kidney meridian manifests in the lower back and knees. Therefore proper stretching and exercises to strengthen the back and leg muscles are extremely helpful in supporting overall kidney health. Certain foods can also help improve kidney health. In particular, dark foods like black beans, black walnuts, as well as seafood are all excellent kidney tonics.

All of the aforementioned items can be provided by a properly trained and fully licensed acupuncturist. So if you or somebody you know is suffering from decreased kidney function or kidney disease of some sort, it would be beneficial to contact a local acupuncturist. TCM coupled with Western medicine can help anybody suffering from these kinds of issues. The two modalities complement one another nicely and allow for the patient to lead a more normal life.

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