

Research Update – Acupuncture and Insomnia

A study published by the Journal of Sleep Medicine shows acupuncture is a safe and effective treatment for insomnia sufferers. The study group was composed of 72 patients with primary insomnia. Acupuncture treatments were given three times a week for four weeks and the patients were required to wear sleep monitors, as well as complete regular questionnaires. The outcomes were measured by the Insomnia Severity Index, sleep efficiency, sleep awakenings and total sleep time. The Insomnia Severity Index of the patients improved greatly, as did the sleep efficiency and the total sleep time. This study provides evidence acupuncture can be of great help to insomnia sufferers.

[http://www.sleep-journal.com/article/S1389-9457\(17\)30093-X/fulltext](http://www.sleep-journal.com/article/S1389-9457(17)30093-X/fulltext)

Insomnia is a pathology that affects an estimated 32 million people in the United States. Insomnia is a sleep disorder characterized by an inability to obtain sufficient sleep, due to difficulty falling asleep or difficulty staying asleep. Insomnia can be either acute or chronic in nature. Acute insomnia is brief and can happen because of certain stressful life circumstances. Chronic insomnia is disrupted sleep that occurs at least three times per week and continues for at least three months. Of the two, chronic insomnia is the worst to experience. Chronic insomnia can lead to fatigue, mental sluggishness, brain fog, irritability, depression, anxiety, excessive worry, difficulty focusing and even accidents.

Traditional Chinese Medicine acknowledges adequate sleep as vitally important for physical, as well as mental well-being. TCM usually views insomnia as an imbalance of energies throughout the body. These energies are known as Qi (pronounced “chee”). There are multiple energetic pathways or meridians that run through the body. A person suffering from insomnia may have imbalances in one or more of these meridians. Most typically, the imbalances occur along the heart, liver and kidney meridians. Stress, poor diet and a lack of exercise can produce a blockage or stagnation of Qi in the body. This stagnation can create heat and deplete fluids or yin in the body. One of the ways to bring balance back to these meridians is through the use of acupuncture.

Acupuncture can be used very effectively, to treat all types of sleep disorders and with none of the toxic side effects associated with medications or sleep aids. Because acupuncture is very customizable to the individual, there may also be beneficial side effects associated with the treatment of insomnia. Many patients report after receiving acupuncture treatments for insomnia they also notice an overall improvement of both their physical and mental wellness.

There is not just one set of points to treat every person with insomnia. Also the root cause of the insomnia may stem from one or multiple issues. Each person is treated holistically with TCM and their bodies are considered unique. Qi may flow differently in some people due to previous

surgeries and medical implants. These are things the TCM practitioner considers before determining the treatment plan for each patient.

If you or somebody you know is suffering from insomnia, it might be worth the time to locate a properly trained and fully-licensed acupuncturist in your area. With licensed acupuncturists in nearly all fifty states, restful sleep may be just a few pin pricks away.