

# Acupuncture Research Update

"You cannot travel the path until you have become the path itself"- Buddha

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## Acupuncture and Intestinal Health



A study conducted by researchers at the Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine and published by the Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine, revealed the possible mechanism by which acupuncture treats Crohn's Disease. This mechanism had been previously unknown, although studies concluded acupuncture and moxibustion can relieve intestinal inflammation in patients suffering from the disease. This study identified there are two subsets of T-lymphocytes, Th17 and Treg cells, that are involved in the development of Crohn's Disease and that acupuncture and moxibustion can help restore the balance between the cells, which could lead to a breakthrough in treatment of the disease.

More than 95 million Americans suffer from some sort of digestive disorder. This includes diarrhea, constipation, irritable bowel syndrome, acid reflux, Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. There is evidence suggesting many of the ailments affecting the digestive system are occurring because of increased pesticides, artificial colorings, additives and preservatives that are being found in our food. Also the overuse of antibiotics has led to an epidemic in the United States that is actually killing the healthy intestinal bacteria that is needed to keep the body functioning properly.

TCM has been used to treat digestive disorders for centuries. According to Chinese medical theory, most digestive disorders are caused by a disharmony of the spleen and stomach. The spleen plays a vital role in the health of the body and it helps to assimilate the nutrients from the food that we ingest. The spleen turns digested food from the stomach into vital energy that is known as Qi (pronounced "chee").

More and more scientific data is coming out that shows the gut is acting like a second brain. The ability of the gastrointestinal system to constantly transform us is being studied extensively. Specifically the bacteria within the gastrointestinal tract is a major focus. The project known as the Human Microbiome Project may have a lot to teach us about our bodies and also how we utilize medicine. This project is confirming that microscopic bacteria colonies within the digestive tract play important roles for both our mental and physical health. The project is confirming that when we nourish these bacterial colonies, we also nourish our bodies.

Research shows we can actually reshape and repopulate damaged bacterial colonies within the gastrointestinal tract. This can be accomplished by tonifying the spleen and stomach during regular acupuncture sessions. One such way to do this is by using a point along the stomach meridian in every single acupuncture treatment. Stomach 36 is a wonderful tonifying point that can help with nearly every intestinal issue. But in addition to utilizing regular acupuncture treatments, acupuncturists can provide dietary supplements and herbs that may help, such as probiotics. Also recommending foods like sauerkraut, kimchi and kombucha may be helpful in repopulating the gut flora.

If you deal with gastrointestinal issues, acupuncture and TCM can be of benefit to you. Just be sure to locate a fully trained and properly licensed acupuncturist for all of your health and wellness needs.

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