

Traditional Chinese Medicine Treatments for Stroke Recovery

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Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) treatments can be used in conjunction with modern therapies to maximize stroke recovery. While pharmaceuticals and physical therapy alone are enough to help a survivor recover from stroke, adding a little TCM to the mix can help boost results even more.

Less Side Effects

Traditional Chinese Medicine relies on herbs, acupuncture, massage, exercise, and dietary therapy to treat health problems. These natural approaches are typically less powerful than pharmaceuticals, but pharmaceuticals also come with powerful – and often unwanted – side effects.

In this light, alternative treatments are an attractive option because they typically involve very mild or no side effects.

Alternative Medicines

There are over one hundred traditional Chinese medicines used for stroke therapy in China. One of these medicines, *Buchang Naoxintong*, contains a component that helps prevent blood clots, an

important factor for ischemic stroke prevention (the blood clot stroke). It also contains a component that decreases inflammation and protects against brain damage.

As more studies are conducted, we are slowly discovering the reasons why traditional Chinese medicines – which have been used for over 2,000 years – are so effective.

Acupuncture Works

Aside from its medicine, TCM is widely known for its skin-pricking practice of acupuncture. The purpose of acupuncture revolves around the Chinese belief that energy, referred to as chi or qi, flows through the body along pathways called meridians. When these meridians become blocked, it causes imbalances and illness in the body, and acupuncture can help relieve these blocks to restore balance. Since acupuncture is a rather unusual practice (with someone sticking hundreds of needles in your skin), there have been plenty of clinical studies to prove its efficacy.

Split Studies

The clinical trial results on the efficacy of TCM are mixed. [One study](#) called it an excellent treatment for post stroke paralysis while [another study](#) attributed most of the benefits to the placebo effect. Either way, benefits still surfaced.

The most [impressive study](#) took one year to complete. During the study, researchers followed 41 stroke patients over 6 weeks with half the group receiving traditional rehab and the other half receiving traditional rehab combined with 30 minute sessions of acupuncture 3-4 times a week for 6 weeks.

The acupuncture group improved significantly more than the control group during these 6 weeks – and at a one year follow up! Was it just the motivation of being in a clinical study? Was it just the placebo effect? Or was it the healing power of China's ancient remedies?

We will never be certain, but all of these studies have one thing in common: TCM combined with physical therapy leads to better outcomes.