Introducing Acupuncture
- a useful tool in your health care toolkit

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15 Minutes to Cover

- Why do I care?
- What is it & how does it work?
- When should I get it & how often?
- When should I NOT get it?
- What’s the difference between acupuncture & dry needling?
- Who practices it & does insurance cover it?
Why do I care about acupuncture?

- Defend against cancer progression
- Boost immunity
- Balance parasympathetic & sympathetic nervous systems
- Help radiation therapy work more effectively
- Reduce side effects of cancer therapy like nausea
What is acupuncture?

- Acupuncture is the practice of inserting hair-thin sterile disposable needles into the skin at specific points on the body at various depths to help the body heal itself.

- Along with acupressure and herbal therapy, acupuncture is practiced in the context of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and other Eastern medical traditions.

  - “Energetic plumbing” that works to affect change on the physical, emotional, mental, & spiritual levels by activating certain points within the myofascia.
How does acupuncture work?

- The theory in TCM is that qi (aka lifeforce, energy, prana, movement) runs through the body in channels at both deep and superficial levels
  - When qi stops moving you have disharmony (pain, disease)
  - TCM causes of disharmony: lack of exercise or sleep, poor nutrition, heredity, trauma, emotions, environment (toxins, EMFs, fashion, weather: wind, cold, heat, damp, dry)
- The Western medical view has various theories as to how acupuncture works that include:
  - Activates nerves which send signals to the brain which releases various chemicals for example: hormones like beta-Endorphins that reduce pain
  - Activates muscles (mechanoreceptors) & connective tissue (release ATP)
  - Reduces pro-inflammatory markers (certain proteins: TNF & IL-1B) to reduce inflammation & pain
When should I get acupuncture & how often?

- ‘It depends.” Depends on your condition, how long you have had it and what it is. Here’s some conventional wisdom:
  - **most issues** = 2x per week until 50% improvement than 1x weekly until resolved
  - **excruciatingly painful/can’t stand it anymore** = everyday treatments UNTIL IT CHANGES FOR THE BETTER
  - **gynecological pain/irregularity** = weekly UNTIL NORMAL; then taper off to only week before cycle
  - **somewhat chronic** issues you’ve had for less than 1 year = once a week for 8-10 weeks then re-evaluate
  - **long-term chronic** issues you’ve had for more than 1 year = 2-3x per week for 8-10 weeks then re-evaluate
  - **wellness and prevention** = 1x weekly before travel, during transitions, change of season, or higher stress

- **You are the expert on you! You decide.**
When shouldn’t I get acupuncture?

- Some things are just too physical for acupuncture to have any effect other than palliative care. Some examples:
  - Uterine fibroids equal to or larger than 4cm
  - Spinal stenosis, osteoarthritis or disc herniation that has severely obstructed nerves, musculature & vasculature
  - “If you break you’re leg, go to the ER.”

- Ideally, acupuncture is best used preventatively despite being what people turn to after ‘they’ve tried everything else’

- If you are needle phobic, acupuncture isn’t your best choice
  - ‘Qi follows the Mind’ & if you have that much fear, your treatment outcome will suffer
What’s the difference between acupuncture & dry needling?

- **Dry Needling Definition**
  “Dry needling is a skilled technique performed by a physical therapist using filiform needles to penetrate the skin and/or underlying tissues to affect change in body structures and functions for the evaluation and management of neuromusculoskeletal conditions, pain, movement impairments, and disability”
  Analysis of Competencies for Dry Needling by Physical Therapists, Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO), 2015

- Legal in Delaware since August, 2014 with passage of HB359

- More information on dry needling:

- The technique of needling in areas of tight & tender muscles in TCM acupuncture is called ‘Surround the Dragon’ so ‘dry needling’ as a subset of acupuncture
Who practices acupuncture?

- Various professions are allowed to practice acupuncture in Delaware:
  - Acupuncturists (L Ac, M Ac)
    - Indicates graduate degree and national certification through NCCAOM (National Certification Commission for Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine) & met state requirements for licensure
  - Medical doctors (MDs)
  - Chiropractors (DCs)
  - Physical therapist (PTs) practice dry needling
- For information on professional requirements, see the Delaware Division of Professional Regulation: [https://dpr.delaware.gov/](https://dpr.delaware.gov/)
Does insurance cover acupuncture?

- “It depends.....” on the insurance & who is doing it
- If you are a veteran you can have acupuncture covered under the Veteran’s Choice Program (VCP)
- If you are a current or retired federal employee (FEP) or from a state like NY, NJ or MD the likelihood of being covered is greater

**ASK** – your insurance carrier and if yes, under what circumstances?
- Anesthesia only for example