

Acupuncture for pain management

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Acupuncture is a unique form of treatment for pain management that have been around for over 5,000 years, and it originated in China. It is recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1979 and is used in 120 countries. It is effective for 103 physical problems including insomnia, stress, migraines, depression, back pain, sciatica, arthritis, sports injuries, etc. It heals 90 percent of a person's body and works like magic to fix chronic pain.

According to acupuncture science, the human body has numerous channels or meridians where acupuncture points are located, and biological energy flows through this channel.

A balance of this 'qi' or 'Chi' is essential to stay healthy, and when the flow of 'qi' is obstructed or imbalanced for any reason, the immunity decreases. The human body can resist all diseases, but if there is an imbalance, people are affected by various diseases.

During acupuncture, the flow of 'qi' is activated by inserting needles into certain obstructed meridian points, and the nerves in the brain are stimulated, blood circulation and oxygen supply increase, and the brain is stimulated to release pain-killing chemicals.

In the 1970s, scientists identified endorphins, chemicals that help relieve pain, and acupuncture increases the secretion of these endorphins or



creates a flow of endorphins by channeling the obstructed 'qi' flow of meridians. This procedure is almost painless, performed with the skill and experience of an acupuncturist physician. It is one of those treatment methods that have no uses for medicines, steroids, painkillers, injections and surgery.

Dr S M Shahidul Islam is one of the pioneers who has contributed to the spread of acupuncture in Bangladesh, treating thousands of patients for wellness at SUO XI Hospital located at Shantinagar Crossroads. He is a master craftsman in acupuncture treatment and cure in Bangladesh. He has also written about 18 research papers in different journals on the modernisation of acupuncture, and some research papers are in the pipeline.

Mayors from around the world to met for inaugural partnership for healthy cities summit

STAR HEALTH DESK

Bloomberg Philanthropies, the World Health Organisation (WHO), and Vital Strategies co-hosted the inaugural partnership for healthy cities summit with London Mayor Sadiq Khan on March 15, 2023. The summit brought together mayors and other city leaders from the Partnership for Healthy Cities global network to discuss strategies to combat the global burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and injuries.

Founded in 2017, the Partnership for Healthy Cities is a prestigious global network of more than 70 cities working together to prevent NCDs and injuries. Supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies in partnership with the World Health Organisation and Vital Strategies, this initiative enables cities around the world to deliver a high-impact policy or programmatic intervention to reduce NCDs and injuries in their communities. Through the Partnership for Healthy Cities, local leaders around the world have enacted policies that are improving the health and safety of millions of people.

"Noncommunicable diseases and injuries are leading causes of death around the world, but they are preventable, and the Partnership for Healthy Cities is tackling them with the kind of urgency we need more of," said Michael R. Bloomberg, Founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and Bloomberg LP, 108th Mayor of New York City, and WHO Global Ambassador for Noncommunicable Diseases and Injuries. "City leaders are the first line of defence in protecting public health, and our network's first-ever summit is an opportunity for even more partners to join the fight, adopt effective interventions, and accelerate our lifesaving work together."



As cities continue to grow, ensuring the health and wellbeing of residents in our world's urban centres is crucial. NCDs – including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases – and injuries are responsible for 80% of all deaths globally. With the majority of the world's population now living in urban settings, cities are uniquely positioned to transform the fight against NCDs and injuries by implementing policies to significantly reduce exposure to risk factors. The Summit will highlight the best practices that are saving lives and creating healthier, more vibrant cities.

"I'm thrilled that London has been chosen to host the first Partnership for Healthy Cities Summit. Building a fairer, greener London for all is one of my top priorities as Mayor, and tackling air pollution is a huge part of that," said Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London. "Toxic air makes us sick from the cradle to the grave, leading to asthma and stunted lung growth in the young and dementia

in the elderly. This is why I decided to expand my world-leading Ultra Low Emission Zone London-wide, to reduce congestion, protect the health of Londoners and tackle the effects of climate change. Cities have the power to shape the health of their citizens and I look forward to learning from and sharing knowledge with other city leaders and coming together to address the key health challenges of the future."

"Human health can either flourish or perish in cities," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "Through the Partnership for Healthy Cities, WHO and partners are working with mayors to create programmes and policies that place health at the centre of urban design, such as safe streets that promote active mobility, local sources of fresh and healthy food, and smoke free spaces. These are vital for building cities that foster good health and well-being by fighting noncommunicable diseases like heart and respiratory diseases, cancer, and diabetes."



HAVE A NICE DAY

Sex differences in the brain

DR RUBAIUL MURSHED

Some behavioural scientists published an infographic on the 'Battle of the Brain: Men vs. Women.' Despite the size difference (the male brain is 10% larger), differences in performances between men and women have long been a topic of debate among scholars. Most psychologists now believe that there are no significant sex differences in general intelligence, although ability in particular types of intelligence does appear to vary slightly on average.

The main sex hormones are estrogen, testosterone, and progesterone. The estrogen is secreted by the ovaries. They help develop and maintain female characteristics and play an important role in the menstrual cycle and fertility. Many behavioural functions are also affected by estrogen, including mood, blood pressure, motor coordination, and pain. Testosterone is mostly secreted by the testes. Small amounts are also made in the adrenal gland. Although it contributes to maleness and masculinity, but also responds to behaviors such as struggle and competition.

Although testosterone exists and functions similarly in women and men, it is converted into estrogen in females, while in men it remains mostly as testosterone. As we grow older, hormones are different between sexes. Females have more oxytocin, which is positive for emotional empathy; while males have more testosterone, which is negatively related to cognitive empathy. Thus, gender differences in empathy may begin to appear.

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Global maternal Strep B vaccination programme could save millions

STAR HEALTH REPORT

A global maternal immunisation programme for group B Streptococcus - strep B - would save millions in healthcare costs by reducing death and disability, but without tiered pricing, equitable access would likely not be achieved.

Several vaccines are currently under development, and an assessment of the impact and value of a global programme was published on March 14th in the open access journal PLOS Medicine. It found that this could avert over 200,000 cases and more than 31,000 deaths, and reduce disability in children.

Strep B can infect pregnant women and their babies, causing sepsis and meningitis in newborns, and sometimes leading to death or disability. It is linked to increased risks of stillbirth and preterm births. As vaccines get closer to approval, a global economic evaluation of vaccination will inform investment decisions in further vaccine development as well as guide fair financing and pricing.

Simon Procter of London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, United Kingdom, and

colleagues developed a model to assess the cost-effectiveness of Strep B vaccines in 140 million pregnant women in 183 countries in 2020. They used recent global estimates of the health burden of strep B in pregnant women and their children and estimated costs to healthcare systems,



calculating quality-adjusted life years lost due to infant mortality and long-term disability.

Based on the World Health Organisation's published list of preferred features for a Strep B vaccine, the team assumed that the vaccine would prevent

infection in 80% of women vaccinated, and that women receiving at least four antenatal visits would get vaccinated.

Vaccination could avert 127,000 early-onset and 87,300 late-onset infant invasive Group B Streptococcal Disease (iGBS) cases, 31,100 deaths, 17,900 cases of moderate and severe neurodevelopmental impairment, and 23,000 stillbirths.

The study is limited by a lack of some data, such as on the impact of Strep B on health-related quality of life and long-term costs of disability, but it estimates that a 1-dose vaccine programme could cost \$1.7 billion globally, while saving \$385 million in healthcare costs. The team caution that regional sensitivities to vaccine prices could affect policy decisions and that tiered vaccine pricing would enable equitable access.

By reducing severe GBS infections, an effective maternal GBS vaccine deployed worldwide could prevent tens of thousands of newborn deaths and stillbirths each year. These findings suggest maternal vaccination against GBS could be cost-effective in most countries, and this will encourage the further investment needed to bring GBS vaccines to market.

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To celebrate the astonishing contribution of women leaders in the Health sector of Bangladesh, USAID's AUHC activity and Surjer Hashi Network (SHN) jointly organised a panel discussion recently.



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