

Auricular Therapy

1. The History

Auricular Therapy has a long history in China. The earliest recorded mention of the close relationship between the Ear and the body is found in Silk Book Meridians, written around 500 BC. Auricular diagnostic and methods were first documented in Nei Jing – The Classic of Medicine, written around 200BC. –To diagnose diseases by inspection of the shape, colour, moistness of the ear. Later practitioners continued to develop the practical application of auricular diagnosis and to do research into the mechanisms of auricular therapy. During the Jin dynasty (265-420AD), auricular massage was widely used to preserve health and to diagnose and treat various diseases and disorders. The use of auricular acupuncture and moxibustion was first recorded during the Tang dynasty (608-907AD). During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644AD), auricular medicinal coating came into use, and auricular massage for children was popular.

In 1957, French practitioner **Dr. Paul Nogier** Published his discovery that the distribution pattern of auricular points was related to the shape of an inverted foetus. After this information was published in China, it spread very fast and people combined Dr. Nogier's theory with traditional Chinese medicine to develop Chinese Auricular Therapy. This new technique is characterized by diagnosis and treatment according to Chinese meridian theory. New points and treatment patterns have been discovered, and the function of both new and old points has been updated.

In 1982, the World Health Organization (WHO) asked the Chinese Acupuncture & Moxibustion Association to formulate the International Standard of Auricular Points.

The development of modern science has led to the development of new treatment methods and equipment. Instead of just a couple of methods, there are now more than 15 ways to perform Auricular Therapy, including massage, electric stimulation, needles, moxa, seeds, magnets, laser, ear pellets etc. More methods give us more choices, making this form of acupuncture ideal for the young and old, and of course for those who are “Shy” of Points, the devices in Acupuncture.

2. What is Auricular Therapy?

Auricular Therapy is the stimulation of the auricle of the external ear for the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions in other parts of the body. It is also known as Ear Acupuncture ---is form of acupuncture using the ear alone to treat disease.

3. How is Auricular Therapy different from Acupuncture?

Auricular Therapy is typically considered one form of acupuncture, but there are both differences and similarities between the two procedures. Acupuncture is a form of medical treatment involving the stimulation of acupuncture points located on energy channels extending over the surface of the body, which are known as meridians. The energy lines of force are blocked or congested when there is some pathology in a specific area of the body, insertion of acupuncture needles into specific acupoints can relieve the symptoms and underlying pathology of a particular health problem. Some of the meridian energy lines of force connect to the external ear, thus creating the field of auricular acupuncture. Different perspectives of auricular therapy focus not on the acupuncture meridians but on the use of the ear as a localized reflex system connected to the central nervous system.

4. Who discovered Auricular Therapy?

While the earliest uses of ear acupuncture points dates back to ancient China, modern applications of auricular therapy are based on the work of Dr. Paul Nogier of Lyon, France. In the 1950's , Dr. Nogier noticed a strange scar on the upper ear of some of his patients. He found that all of them had been treated for sciatica pain by a local lay practitioner. This woman had cauterized a specific area of external ear in order to relieve their low back pain. Dr. Nogier conducted a similar procedure on his own sciatica patients and found that their back pain was also reduced. He then tried other means of stimulating this "sciatica point", including the use of acupuncture needles, and found that they too were effective in alleviating sciatica pain. Dr. Nogier theorized that if an area of the upper external ear is effective in treating low back pain, maybe other parts of the ear could treat other parts of the body. The ear is said to represent the whole anatomical body, but in an upside down orientation. Nogier's theory contended that the auricle could be compared to an inverted fetus, with the head represented on the lower ear lobe, the feet at the top of the external ear, and the rest of the body in-between. This model was first presented to naturopathic practitioners in France in 1957, then spread to acupuncture in Germany, and finally was translated into Chinese. The Chinese seemed to have adopted the inverted foetus model of ear acupuncture in 1958.

5. What is the effect of wearing earrings?

A common thought that occurs to many people is to question the consequence of wearing earrings when they are located at auricular acupuncture points. The classical location of earrings placed on the center of the ear lobe occurs at the eye point and has been reported to relieve visual disturbances. The response of ear reflex points to earrings depends on both the healing of the skin tissue where the ear has been pierced and the type of metal used in the ear ring. If the skin where the ear has been pierced has not completely healed, the metal in the ear ring can release electrically charged ions into the skin. Whether those ions help or harm any pathology in the corresponding part of the body depends upon whether the metal is gold, which releases positive ions, or silver, which releases negative ions.

6. What health conditions are most helped by auricular therapy?

Because every part of the external ear connects through the microsystem to every part of the body, a wide variety of health problems are relieved by auricular therapy. Almost all health conditions can be affected to some degree by stimulating reactive ear points. The most commonly reported uses of auricular therapy have been for the control of chronic pain, detoxification from addictive drugs, relief of nausea, and reduction of hypertension.

7. How does auricular therapy affect pain conditions?

From a TCM perspective, pain is due to the blockage of Qi energy in the acupuncture meridian channels, thus creating an imbalance in the macro-acupuncture system. By stimulating specific ear points in the auricular microsystem, bi-directional connections are activated in the body microsystem which lead to a balancing of energy and an increase flow of Qi.

8. How does auricular therapy affect drug abuse?

Auricular therapy in reducing the substance cravings of drug addicts came from Hong Kong in 1970's, and were expanded upon by Dr. Michel Smith, a physician who practices Oriental Medicine in New York City. The Lung point on the ear used to relieve addiction disorders is said to affect the energy of the Lung meridian, which affects not only respiratory disorders but problems with detoxification. A Western neurological explanation of drug detoxification with auricular therapy is based on the observation that the concha area of the ear which is used to treat addiction problems represents the control of the autonomic nervous system through the vagus nerve and through the hypothalamus of the brain.