

Pain in the Neck, Pain in the Butt: Acupuncture, Dental and Massage Therapy

By Simon Yu, MD and Elizabeth Barnhart, BS, LMT

Have you ever awakened in the middle of the night with a pain in the neck or low back spasm and can't fall asleep? Or have you ever restricted your daily activities because of sore muscles and spasms in any part of body and you don't remember doing any strenuous physical exertion?

Pain is one of the most common reasons for seeking professional help. Pain management is not my specialty but pain is one of the most common complaints I hear from my patients everyday.

Many of them were evaluated and treated by a variety of specialists and are still in chronic pain. When I see those chronic pain patients, I try not to dwell on their specific pain, their primary focus. The symptom of pain is a manifestation of a dysfunction within the whole body. I always start with a meridian assessment by evaluating 54 key acupuncture points (See an article on this topic on my web site.) I also recommend a detoxification therapy tailored to the individual.

Understanding the meridian flow can explain why and where the energy flow is blocked in the body thus creating the inflammation and pain. As an example, pain in the neck or buttock (sciatic) area might be from a blocked Gallbladder Meridian. Treating with appropriate parasite medications and eliminating the causes of previously undetected food allergies can, sometimes, "miraculously" relieve the pain.

For some people, extraction of an asymptomatic infected root canal and/or correcting a dental bite problem will relieve the neck or buttock pain. For some people, acupuncture with needles at the toes along the blocked meridian can relieve an inflammation and pain in the neck or buttock.

Massage therapy is probably one of the oldest, well known yet under utilized therapies for pain management. There are many different modalities of massage including foot massage, sports massage, Neuro-Muscular Therapy, and those based on a national style such as Thai or Swedish massage, etc.

I'll let Elizabeth Barnhart, a massage therapist in my clinic, explain her specialty of Neuro-Muscular Therapy. Neuro-Muscular Therapy manipulates the muscle and the fascia of the soft tissues. It brings about a balance between muscles, the skeletal system, and nervous system by focused, concentrated massage on a trigger point.

Trigger points can be caused by any trauma, injury or overuse. A trigger point will let itself be known as a deep lingering pain or sharp pain which radiates to or refers to other areas of the body. Trigger points are areas of irritation in muscle fibers resulting in blocked energy, decreased blood flow, and diminished nutrients to the muscle. They cause a build up of metabolic toxins and a compromised oxygen supply to the muscles which leads to inflammation, soreness and pain.

Over time, one will experience a decrease in a range of motion, muscle strength and flexibility. When left untreated, a vicious cycle is established by this imbalanced condition where extra pressure is often put on a nerve which then causes greater pain, numbness, and tingling sensations.

Trigger points are specific localized inflamed areas in the muscle which may spread to other areas of the muscle or extend beyond adjacent muscles. (Trigger points often correlate with acupuncture points.) In the hands of a trained, experienced massage therapist or acupuncturist, trigger points can be found and deactivated.

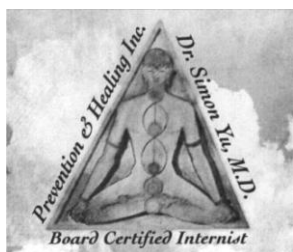
Pain is relieved when the blockage is removed and blood flow is once again restored to the area. Other benefits can include increased flexibility, greater range of motion, a more balanced posture, increased energy, and less stress to your total body burden.

When you are suffering from an unresolved chronic pain, you need to explore why, where and what triggers your pain. Many times, it is not what you think it is. It could be your dental problem, toxin build up in your body, allergies, hidden infection or blocked energy flow at trigger points.

Think “outside the box” before trying invasive procedures. You may need an acupuncturist, dentist or massage therapist as a part of your treatment plan team with your medical doctor, chiropractor or physical therapist.

After a rotator cuff injury, I personally benefited from Neuro-Muscular Therapy by Elizabeth and Sport’s Massage therapy by Dana Brae. For many people, therapeutic massage is not a luxury but a necessity.

Dr. Simon Yu, M.D. is a Board Certified Internist. He practices Internal Medicine with an emphasis on Alternative Medicine to use the best each has to offer. For more articles and information about alternative medicine as well as patient success stories visit his web site at www.preventionandhealing.com or call Prevention and Healing, Inc., 314-432-7802. You can also attend a free monthly presentation and discussion by Dr. Yu on Alternative Medicine at his office on the second Tuesday each month at 6:30 pm. Please call to verify the date and reserve your space.



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