

# Knock migraines on the head: traditional acupuncture and migraines



## Migraine Awareness Week - 4th to 10th September 2016

\*In the UK 1 in 7 people at any one time experience a migraine attack.

A migraine is a complex neurological condition, which can affect the whole body and can result in many symptoms, sometimes without a headache at all. Migraines can be easily overlooked or mistaken for other conditions and can affect people in many different ways.

A migraine can involve recurrent attacks that can last up to three days and sufferers may also experience double vision, nausea and vomiting. Migraines are often thought to be caused by emotional strain, stress, hormonal imbalances, and lack of food and/or sleep or by a reaction to some foods or medications.

Research has shown that **traditional acupuncture can be very beneficial in the treatment of migraines** as it tends to lessen the frequency and severity of attacks. NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) recommends acupuncture for headaches and migraines. Migraines can manifest in very different ways and a fully qualified acupuncture practitioner will want to know, among other things exactly where the pain is located, what the nature of the pain is and whether the patient has any accompanying symptoms. An individual diagnosis and treatment plan is then tailored to the patient based on this information and on their general health history.

Andy Levy, our traditional acupuncturist and British Acupuncture Council member says: "As a traditional acupuncturist I recognise the same approach is not always appropriate for each individual as symptoms differ from person to person. Certain foods may be associated with headaches or patients may find that headaches occur during their menstrual cycle, emotional issues may also be an important component

in the evaluation of migraine.

A typical traditional acupuncture treatment involves the insertion of fine, single use, sterile needles. This action stimulates nerves located in muscles and other tissues to provide pain relief and increase blood flow in and around the brain. This process also alleviates individual underlying imbalances which are contributing long term to the person's condition".

Traditional acupuncture is a tried and tested system of healthcare which has been used in China and other eastern cultures for thousands of years to restore, promote and maintain good health. It aims to treat the root cause of a condition and promote long-term wellness, rather than just alleviating symptoms. **Its benefits are now widely acknowledged all over the world** and, in the past decade, traditional acupuncture has begun to feature more prominently in mainstream healthcare in the UK.

### **About the British Acupuncture Council**

The British Acupuncture Council (BAcC) is the UK's largest governing body of traditional acupuncture with over 3,000 members - each of whom is an accredited practitioner providing the highest standard of professional care to patients.

As a member of BAcC, Andy Levy practises a traditional, holistic style of acupuncture diagnosis and treatment based on a system developed and refined over 2,000 years. This style of acupuncture differs from that used by medical practitioners such as physiotherapists where the technique of 'dry needling' is adopted. Although both practises use needles, dry needling aims for 'trigger points' whereas traditional acupuncture is based on the meridian system.

To achieve BAcC membership, practitioners must first undertake extensive training in acupuncture (minimum three years full-time at BSc or BA degree level) which includes physiology, anatomy and other biomedical sciences appropriate to the practice of acupuncture and their expert practice skills are maintained by following a mandatory individual programme of continuing professional development (CPD). BAcC membership is also a mark of assurance of high standards in professionalism, training and safety.

The British Acupuncture Council is also accredited by the Professional Standards Authority.

### **About Traditional Acupuncture**

With 2.3 million acupuncture treatments carried out each year, traditional acupuncture is one of the most popular complementary therapies practised in the UK today. Based on ancient principles which go back nearly two thousand years, acupuncture involves gently placing extremely fine, sterile needles at specific points on the body to trigger a healing response.