

Dr Beijing Newsletter

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Do Needles Hurt?

Talking about acupuncture, most common reaction from people are shivering their shoulder and say : " ohhh, needles..." Does acupuncture really hurt? My answer is yes or no. If I say " no", I am probably lying. If I say "yes", it is not totally true. Whether the needles hurt, it really depends on where the needles go to. In general case, people will feel a prick when the needles go into the skin, after that, a tingling, warm or numb sensation will occur. Some sensation will propagate from the point of needling to another part of the body, but this shouldn't be a painful feeling. Traditional Chinese medicine calls this "De qi", which means "achieve the goal." Acupuncture aims to treat the problem through stimulating the nerves.

Modern studies have revealed that acupuncture stimulates one or more of the signalling systems, which can, under certain circumstances, increase the rate of healing response. These findings can explain most of the clinical effects of acupuncture therapy.

According to current understanding, the primary signalling system affected by acupuncture is the nervous system, which not only transmits signals along the nerves that comprise it, but also emits a variety of biochemistries that influence other cells of the body. The nervous system, with over 30 peptides involved in transmitting signals, is connected to the hormonal system via the adrenal gland, and it makes connections to every cell and system of the body.

When I studied acupuncture 30 years ago, I probably was the most terrified by the needles in my class. I even couldn't look at the needles when my teacher put the needles into the patients body until one day, when I was training in the hospital, I got a very bad period pain. I was very pale, and very sick. One of the teachers put one needle into each of my legs, and put moxibustion on my tummy, I didn't feel the needles at all, apart from that, my pain was stopped in few minutes, and I was back to normal very soon. Since then, I have never been scared by needles again. Instead of frightening needles, I used acupuncture to treat myself when I need it.