

Case in Point

Is Acupuncture the Best Hope for Correcting Failing Vision

By Andrew S. Rosenfarb, Dipl. Ac., Dipl. C.H., L.Ac.

For many who suffer from degenerative eye conditions, acupuncture and Oriental medicine may be the last and best hope. Conventional medicine has little to offer people suffering with conditions such as macular degeneration, glaucoma and retinitis pigmentosa.

My interest in treating degenerative eye conditions began when I was an acupuncture student at Pacific College in San Diego. As a result of intense reading, writing and studying, my eyesight was noticeably deteriorating. After I did some acupuncture on myself for a few months, a routine screening by my optometrist revealed that the astigmatism in both of my eyes had resolved. He was astounded, and questioned me on what I had been doing. I explained that my eyes had been feeling tired, blurry, and that I was getting minor headaches from studying so much, and was using acupuncture to help my eyes.

When I started to practice I took on a few cases of degenerative eye conditions including glaucoma, cataracts, peripheral retinopathy, retinitis pigmentosa and macular degeneration. Some cases were mild and some were severe (several patients were legally blind). I found that I became rather frustrated with my results. A few patients showed some improvement, but nothing exceptional. I began to seek the aid of others in my field who had had success. For the most part, other than suggestions of reviewing my diagnosis, everyone seemed to have the same points, herbs and exercises.

I tried them all for my patients, to no avail!

One day, I was reading a health magazine and came across an acupuncturist in Arkansas who was treating people with various degenerative eye diseases and claiming to have excellent results. I called to find out what his method was. I would have to wait three years before I could get to Arkansas to train with him, but finally I made it out to his clinic and was amazed at the success rate. Each patient I talked to gave overwhelming testimonials.

"Wow!" I thought, "This is incredible. This form of acupuncture, called Micro Acupuncture™ is really helping people to see again." I went back to my practice in New Jersey and started working on my friends, my family, my patients and myself. The results I got were nothing short of amazing!

Micro Acupuncture is a new procedure involving 48 newly discovered acupuncture points located only in the hands and feet and not associated with any other acupuncture system. These points were discovered by Dr. Freddy Dahlgren, D.Ss., D.Ac., M.Ac.F., M.D., in Denmark in 1984 and researched by Dr. Dahlgren and Dr. Per G. Otte, D.Sc., D.Ac., M.Ac.F. More than 5,000 people have been treated with this procedure throughout Europe, and more than 10,000 people have benefited from Micro Acupuncture treatment in the U.S. Eighty percent of the patients treated have had a marked improvement in their vision.

Micro Acupuncture is used for a variety of medically diagnosed eye conditions, most commonly macular

degeneration, peripheral retinopathy and glaucoma. The success of the treatments varies from patient to patient depending on age and how well the patient responds to treatment. The amount of treatments a patient may need also depends on how well the patient responds and the degree of improvement the patient desires.

I have found that it is not always best to rely on the patient's subjective impression of their progress. For this reason I choose to do vision testing, which consists of a visual acuity test (a standard eye chart test) and a vision field scanner used by many optometrists to test the degenerating vision field in patients diagnosed with glaucoma and vision loss. This vision test, which does not require dilating or any other form of preparation of the eye, enables me to track the progress of the patient by effectively "mapping" the patient's field of vision. After the vision field scanning is performed, needles are placed in the hands and feet only for twenty minutes per treatment. A second scan is performed after five treatments to see if there is any change. An average of twenty treatments are given until the patient is satisfied or there is no further change.

In conjunction with acupuncture, I usually recommend Chinese herbs and nutritional supplements. Among the most common are Ginkgo Biloba, essential fatty acids (flax, borage, black current, fish oil), lutein, bilberry, L-taurine, zeaxanthin and other supplements that have shown clinical efficacy in improving circulation and nourishment to the eyes. Chinese herbal formulas are based on individual TCM diagnosis.

I have also found that a marked number of my patients have heavy "free radical" damage or oxidation. In these patients, antioxidants are extremely important in the overall treatment of degenerative eye conditions. There are many good antioxidants on the market today but from a TCM viewpoint we know that different substances will have different effects. For example, green tea, one of the best known antioxidants, is very drying in nature. Therefore, it is not wise to use green tea with a Yin-deficient patient, but black currant

seed oil would serve as an antioxidant and nourish Yin for that same patient. Other antioxidants include vitamins A, C, and E, selenium, grape seed, bilberry, and glutathione.

Acupuncture can offer so much to so many and it is our duty as active practitioners to educate the public about the benefits. The more people know, the more people we can help. ■

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