

Young patients with chronic illnesses find relief in acupuncture

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Doctors at Rush University Medical Center are offering pediatric patients diagnosed with chronic illnesses acupuncture therapy to help ease the pain and negative side effects like nausea, fatigue, and vomiting caused by chronic health conditions and intensive treatments. The confluence of Chinese and Western medicine at Rush Children's Hospital is part of a study to analyze and document how acupuncture might help in reducing pain in children and increase quality of life.

"Treating children with [acupuncture](#) is a new frontier," said Dr. Paul Kent, pediatric hematology and oncology expert, Rush Children's Hospital. "We are looking to see if there is an effective [pain](#) management therapy we can offer that does not have the serious side effects that can be caused by narcotics and other serious pain medications."

The lack of options for pain management in children has been reported as one of the most difficult aspects of providing care to pediatric patients. Research indicates that up to 70 percent of pediatric patients experience pain and those with chronic illnesses often do not have adequate relief or prevention of pain.

"Acupuncture could be a potential solution to this dilemma of controlling pain in pediatric patients," said Angela Johnson, Chinese medicine practitioner at Rush.

Acupuncture is the use of tiny, hair-thin needles which are gently

inserted along various parts of the body. The therapy is based on the premise that patterns of energy flowing through the body are essential for health. This energy, called Qi, flows along certain pathways. It is believed that placing the tiny needles at points along the pathways reduce pain and improve the healing process.

The National Institute of Health (NIH) has published a statement concluding that acupuncture is effective for treating adults for nausea following chemotherapy and for pain after dental surgery. The agency also said that the therapy might be useful in treating other health issues such as addiction, migraines, headaches, menstrual cramps, abdominal pain, tennis elbow, fibromyalgia, arthritis, low-back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome and asthma. In some pediatric studies, both patients and parents have stated that acupuncture treatments were both helpful and relaxing.

Rush will be offering acupuncture therapy to pediatric patients between the ages of 5-20 years of age, who are experiencing pain. A practitioner who is licensed in acupuncture by the State of Illinois and certified by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine will be giving the treatments. Study participants will receive eight acupuncture treatments at no charge.

"Many children with chronic or acute health issues turn to complementary or integrative approaches after all other conventional treatment options are exhausted," said Johnson. "Parents should be aware that integrative therapies like acupuncture can be helpful from the onset of disease and can have a tremendously positive influence on a child's quality of life."

Provided by Rush University Medical Center

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