



## Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) – An Emerging Adjunct in Routine Oral Care

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### ABSTRACT

Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) ('acus' (needle) + 'punctura' (to puncture)) is the stimulation of specific points along the skin of the body involving various methods such as penetration by thin needles or the application of heat, pressure, or laser light. Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) aims to treat a range of medical and dental ailments, though is most commonly used for pain relief. This article reviews about the various possible roles of acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) in clinical dental practice. Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) has potential in supplementing conventional treatment procedures by its diverse applicability outreach. Role of acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) in dental practice has been well supported by clinical trials. Its role in alleviating facial pain, pre-operative and post-operative dental pain has led to its widespread application. Its role as sole analgesic for treatment procedure has to be tested. It's a thought that acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) may prove an indispensable supplement to conventional treatment modalities and more of clinical trials and studies are required to prove the efficacy. Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) is not a miracle cure and is not going to replace the drill. However, the technique can be a supplement to conventional treatments in TMDs, facial pain, pain management Sjogren's syndrome, and in phobias and anxiety. The application and use of Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) comes with some side effects. Proper training needs to be obtained before commencement of any procedure related to acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ). Various training programs are offered to train clinical practitioners the apt method to use acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ).

**Key words:** Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ), Dentist, Dentistry, Health, Oral health, Traditional Chinese medicine

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## INTRODUCTION

Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) is one of the “complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)” techniques used to treat a variety of diseases and disorders. Up to one third of the public in many countries has been shown to consult a CAM practitioner at least once a year.

Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) is defined as the stimulation of the so-called ‘acupoints’ for disease prevention, treatment or maintenance of health. Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) can utilize various methods including solid needles, lasers, electro-acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) and transcutaneous nerve stimulation.

Evidence of origin of Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) dates back to 3000 years.<sup>[1]</sup> It was China which came up with the idea of Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ). The earliest account of this is found in the book called *Nei Jing* which in English means the Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine. The contents of this book date somewhere around 200 BC. Back then, they did not use metal needles and instead used those made out of stone, moxibustion and herbs to treat a patient. It is being relied and used practically as an useful adjunct in various medical and allied health sciences. Several studies are suggestive of the pivotal role of acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) in healing of several diseases and alleviating pain.<sup>[2]</sup> Literature has proved the role of acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) in withdrawal of narcotics.<sup>[3]</sup> There are several smoking cessation medications and therapies available presently. However acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) is a recommended alternative procedure, especially where conventional therapies have already failed. We feel, however, that serious consideration of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper. It is thought that acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) is a technique involving ancient knowledge of Chinese philosophy and is of no use in dentistry as it works on the placebo concept but the tremendous research on acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) has proved it wrong.<sup>[4]</sup> Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) is effective in numerous conditions like temporomandibular disorders (TMDs), pain management, and clinical conditions like Sjogren’s syndrome.<sup>[5-7]</sup> As because the use of acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) has evolved since last few decades, Skeptics shrug off the positive effects of acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) as merely placebo effects. Believers in acupuncture, (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) however, say that the benefits have simply not yet been proven. Believers promote that the treatment is harmless and can be used as a complement to western medicine.

Published controlled studies on the effect of acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) in dentistry are still relatively few, but those which fulfill predefined methodological criteria are reviewed to assess if acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) is effective in this field. Anxiety related to dental treatment is rife, and there is a clinical impression that acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) can offer an alternative to the sedative drugs commonly used although no controlled Studies are available.

In recent years interest for acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) in dentistry has increased at least partly because of published results of its efficacy. However the literature is not extensive and results vary considerably: from no effect to significant improvement. The main of this article is to discuss and review methodologically the

published clinical trials to determine whether clear conclusions can be obtained with the use of acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ).

## DEFINITION AND TYPES

Acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) is a medical technique in which needles are inserted into the skin and underlying tissues. One or more small metal needles are inserted at precise points along 12 meridians (pathways) in the body, through which the vital life force (qi) is believed to flow, in order to restore yin-yang balance and treat disease caused by yin-yang imbalance. Practitioners of Chinese traditional medicine believe in energy flows. This energy, called Qi, circulates around the body using pathways called meridians. Meridians run very close to the surface of the skin in certain areas and can be accessed by needles. Much like plumbing, these pipes can get blocked or go the wrong way, causing health problems. The insertion of needles at these points is aimed to help loosen blocks and normalize flow. The Chinese describe acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) by the character “Chen,” which literally means “to prick with a needle,” a graphic description of this therapeutic technique. It is a treatment procedure in which generally steel, silver, or gold needles are inserted into specific acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) points.<sup>[8,9]</sup>

Various techniques used in acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) are as follows:<sup>[2,6,9-14]</sup>

- Traditional body acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) (It uses eight principles of complementary opposites to create harmony in the body. These include yin/yang, internal/external, excess/deficiency, hot/cold.)
- Microsystems acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) such as ear acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ)
- Electro-acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ)
- Trigger point acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ)
- Laser treatment
- Moxibustion
- Acupressure
- Okibari – Japanese style

At times, acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) is more effective when the needles are first heated. This technique is known as “moxibustion.” Here, the acupuncturist lights a small bunch of the dried herb called moxa or mugwort and holds it above the needles. The herb, which burns slowly and gives off a little smoke and a pleasant, incense-like smell, will never directly touch one’s body. Another variation is electrical acupuncture. (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) Here, electrical wires are hooked up to the needles and a weak current runs through it which may cause no or little sensation at all. There is also auricular acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) where it is believed that the ear is a microcosm of the body. This means that acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) needles are placed on certain points on the ear so it can treat certain addiction disorders.

## HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

In traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), The history of acupuncture (針灸 Zhēn Jiǔ) can be dated back to 2000 years ago i.e during the Warring states and the Qin and Han dynasties.<sup>[15]</sup>

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