

Laser Acupuncture and Musculoskeletal Pain



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The most common reason for an individual to seek treatment by an acupuncture physician is musculoskeletal pain. Laser acupuncture is an integral part of the strategy we use in our clinic. The effectiveness of low-intensity lasers in the treatment of musculoskeletal pain is well-supported by positive, double-blind studies. Please refer to the list at the end of this article. Whenever I use a laser, I imagine it as a torch, melting away blockages and restoring the flow of *qi*.

Case Studies

Hip Pain

PP is a 76-year-old male who reported chronic left hip pain since replacement surgery in 1992. He believed a second procedure would be necessary, and came to us more or less as a last resort. PP rated the pain at four on a 0-10 scale before treatment. He described his left hip as chronically uncomfortable, with sudden, stabbing pain on movement. Immediately after the first treatment, PP scored his pain at two. Pain scores were less than one thereafter. He was seen for four treatments. Before the last treatment, PP reported that his hip pain was gone. Three months later, he stated that he was virtually pain-free, and no longer contemplating surgery.

Back and Hip Pain

GB is a 70-year-old pharmacist whose primary complaint was pain in the right low back and hip, radiating to the posterior thigh, for which he was considering surgery. He was seen for a total of seven treatments and reported a complete absence of pain after the fifth session.

"Tennis" Elbow

KK is an active, 42-year-old female who operates a janitorial service and had experienced chronic pain in the lateral epicondyle of her right elbow for many years. She attributed the pain to her occupation and came to our office because of an acute exacerbation affecting her ability to work. KK rated her pain at eight on a 0-10 scale before the first session. She was seen twice weekly for eight visits, scoring her elbow pain at less than one before the last session. Five months later, when KK returned for treatment of acute low back pain, she rated her elbow pain at zero and reported that the problem appeared to have resolved completely.

Shoulder Pain

BS is a 41-year-old professional dancer who injured his right shoulder while lifting his dance partner. He came to our clinic four months later to strengthen the shoulder to be able to compete professionally once again. BS was unwilling to risk lifting his partner during practice for fear of further injury. He rated his pain before treatment at three on a 0-10 scale with his arm at rest, and at five when raised above shoulder level. After nine treatments, BS reported a pain score of less than one, and was able to lift his partner and compete professionally.

Knee Pain

CY is a 44-year-old female whose primary complaint was pain in both knees, which she rated at four before treatment on a 0-10 scale. She was seen for five visits, but reported that the pain had resolved completely after the second treatment.

Hip, Low Back and Shoulder Pain

SB is an athletic 53-year-old female who came to our clinic with pain in both hips, the low back and left shoulder. She was treated on five occasions before returning home at the end of her vacation. In most instances, SB reported pain scores of zero immediately after each treatment, and her pretreatment scores also declined progressively over the course of therapy. She rated the worst pain in her left hip at six on a 0-10 scale before treatment and at two prior to the last treatment. Pain scores in her low back and shoulder were zero before the last treatment. SB was unable to touch her toes before beginning treatment, though she came within two centimeters of doing so; she was able to touch her toes before the last treatment.

Positive Double-Blind Studies in Musculoskeletal Disorders

Arthritis

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Epicondylitis

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