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What Conditions Does Acupuncture Treat (According to the World Health Organization)?

In contemporary applications of acupuncture in North America, it is becoming increasingly common to hear patients complain that they are being challenged by their insurance carrier with the comment that acupuncture is not effective for a particular situation, and therefore coverage is denied. Of course, it is obvious that insurance companies are in the business to minimize costs, and escalate productivity and profit. As a result, it is not uncommon or unlikely that our patients will be denied coverage only because the insurance carrier has deemed acupuncture is not an effective or approved treatment.

The World Health Organization (WHO), whose authority concerning health-related matters internationally cannot be challenged, has compiled a list of symptoms, syndromes, disease processes, pathologies, traumas and conditions that have definitely been proven as effectively treated by acupuncture. The WHO has also compiled a list of diseases, symptoms and conditions for which acupuncture has shown definite therapeutic effects, but more proof is needed to establish acupuncture as a mainstream form of treatment. Should a curious patient, insurance company or colleague require proof of acupuncture's effectiveness, the following list is something you will want to keep on file. Its use will be inevitable.

In an official report, *Acupuncture: Review and Analysis of Reports on Controlled Clinical Trials*, the WHO (WHO) has listed the following symptoms, diseases and conditions that have been shown through controlled trials to be treated effectively by acupuncture:

- low back pain
- neck pain
- sciatica
- tennis elbow
- knee pain
- periarthritis of the shoulder
- sprains
- facial pain (including craniomandibular disorders)
- headache
- dental pain
- tempromandibular (TMJ) dysfunction
- rheumatoid arthritis
- induction of labor
- correction of malposition of fetus (breech presentation)
- morning sickness
- nausea and vomiting
- postoperative pain
- stroke
- essential hypertension
- primary hypotension

renal colic
leucopenia
adverse reactions to radiation or chemotherapy
allergic rhinitis, including hay fever
biliary colic
depression (including depressive neurosis and depression following stroke)
acute bacillary dysentery
primary dysmenorrhea
acute epigastralgia
peptic ulcer
acute and chronic gastritis

The foregoing list is absolute concerning acupuncture's effectiveness; however the report continues with three more categories:

1. Diseases, symptoms and conditions for which the therapeutic effect of acupuncture has been shown, but further proof is needed (68 specific conditions). These conditions are effectively treated as in the first category; it's just that more trials are necessary to establish the proof scientifically.
2. Diseases, symptoms and conditions reporting some therapeutic effects for which acupuncture is worth trying (nine conditions).
3. Diseases, symptoms and conditions in which acupuncture may be tried, provided the practitioner has special modern medical knowledge and adequate monitoring equipment (eight conditions).

Due to space limitations, should any reader wish to have a list of the last three categories of effectiveness outlined, please e-mail me with your request. Let's continue as healers to effectively treat this broad range of conditions. Best wishes!

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Editor's note: If you would like to comment on Dr. Amaro's article, please contact Acupuncture Today by fax (714-899-4273) or e-mail (Editorial@AcupunctureToday.com). You are also encouraged to discuss Dr. Amaro's article on his "Talk Back" forum at www.AcupunctureToday.com/columnists/amaro.