

Medicine beyond frontiers

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Acupuncture in the Viewpoint of Modern Medicine

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Acupuncture, an ancient therapeutic technique, is becoming more accepted into the practice of modern medicine as a therapeutic intervention or a modality of alternative. Many studies in humans demonstrated regionally specific, quantifiable acupuncture effects on relevant structures of the human brain. Research with animal models indicates that stimulation by acupuncture activates the subcortical level in the brain resulting in alteration in the secretion of neurotransmitters and neurohormones and changes in the regulation of blood flow, both centrally and peripherally. The peripheral and spinal mechanisms underlying acupuncture analgesia were extensively investigated. Opioid and non-opioid mechanisms are involved in acupuncture effect. However which of these and other physiological changes mediate clinical effect is at present unclear. The effectiveness of acupuncture in treating the nausea and vomiting related to chemotherapy and adult postoperative surgery and postoperative dental pain is promising. There are many other situations that acupuncture may be of benefit. Continued research in acupuncture, both basic and clinical, is necessary to verify acupuncture's further underlying mechanism and clinical effectiveness, allowing it to be rationally incorporated into the modern medical practice.