

Acupuncture

The history of acupuncture in China goes back at least 2000 years. Considered gentle and safe, acupuncture aids the body's healing and preventive mechanisms by "unblocking" energy channels throughout the body. These energy channels are our "life force" or Qi (pronounced "chee"); when these passages are blocked, it's believed that sickness or pain may follow. Acupuncture focuses as much on the prevention of illness as treatment.

How does it work?

Thin, sterilised needles are inserted into specific points on the skin. Clients may experience warmth or tingling around these sites but not pain. Some practitioners use Chinese herbs as part of the remedy.

Judy James, CEO of the Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association (AACMA), says most clients seeking acupuncture five years ago were "middle-class, middle-aged, educated, professional women" but now more young people are seeking this form of therapy.

Migraines, stomach pain, gynaecological problems, back pain, repetitive strain injury, anxiety, depression, shingles, high blood pressure and varicose veins are some complaints being seen by therapists in this field. Not long ago, people turned to acupuncture as a last resort, but many now turn to these sorts of therapies as soon as they start experiencing pain or discomfort.

Judy says this has changed how the profession works. "There is an added responsibility when seeing the client first because you need to identify other conditions that might be present," she says. It's not just the specific complaint being addressed, but our whole body and lifestyle.

Is it recognised by the AMA?

Yes. Practitioners are required to complete a four to five-year bachelor degree to be qualified. This requirement for accreditation has earned respect from the medical profession, which means more GPs are referring patients to acupuncturists than ever before.

How much does it cost?

The AACMA recommends \$60 for an initial consultation and \$50 for a follow-up visit, although therapists will invariably set their own fees depending mainly on the location of their practice. Chronic conditions may require a course of treatments while acute pain may only take a few appointments.