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Acupuncture And Enzymes In A Financial Crunch Time

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The news is full of worries, including evidence that people are cutting back on seeking needed health care. I'll start this column by saying: *please don't do that!* Even in financial crunch times, it's cost effective to care for your health. The trick is to choose wisely so as to stretch your healthcare dollar.

Not All Healthcare Systems Offer the Same Types of Help

Just as there are many ways to be sick (or well), there are many types of medical help... and they don't all offer the same thing. Biomedicine—the medicine that medical doctors, most osteopaths, nurses, psychologists, dentists and others offer—specializes in using a lot of lab tests to identify *pathologies*, and in treating *established diseases*. They treat diseases with pharmaceutical drugs and surgery. While this Medicine is the one most familiar to most of us, and best covered by insurance, it is also, by far, the most technological and the most expensive. Therefore, if you want to stretch your healthcare dollar, begin by considering alternatives to biomedicine.

One full service alternative is Oriental medical care (OM), which includes acupuncture, herbs, moving meditation (qi gung, tai chi), massage and diet, and provides a *whole-person approach* to maintaining and ameliorating health. Oriental medical care can diagnose and treat almost any complaint or situation. I say this even though



Acupuncture photo : Jacob Wackerhausen

there is not sufficient research (see sources at the end of this article) to back up the use of OM for 'everything'; but then, there isn't sufficient research to thoroughly back up any form of medical care! The technology of OM is simple though effective... and it is inexpensive.

OM is guided by centuries of experience, and typically takes a holistic approach to the person seeking medical care. This means that YOU are the center of attention, and it is the response of YOUR body that matters...not theory, not statistics. Typically, an American-trained acupuncturist will expect you to act as a *partner* in your medical care, that is, while delivering medical care, s/he will also make suggestions for self-care, and expect you to pay attention! Recommendations include exercises, diet, rest and refreshment—things capable of delivering a lot of improvement to a suffering body that you can do

for yourself at low cost.

To get an idea of what one acupuncturist has treated—that would be me!—take a look at the Table, and read the 'true stories' at the end of this column.

Know that some acupuncturists specialize. For example, if you have fertility or pregnancy issues, it's best to see an acupuncturist who specializes in those conditions. Additionally, some acupuncturists are skilled herbalists, massage therapists, or qi gung teachers. Any of these special skills may serve you particularly well. All are relatively low in cost, and increasingly, insurance is covering part of the cost, sometimes to 80%, just like biomedicine.

Other alternatives that, like OM, can address a wide range of complaints include naturopathy, homeopathy, and chiropractic. Each of these can integrate with OM very nicely. After the whole-care systems come simpler interventions, like massage therapy, reiki, or foot reflexology. Cost will depend on your practitioner and your responsiveness, which includes both your body's ability to respond, and your mental-emotional willingness to do the tasks needed to maintain health or treat a condition.

Self-Care to Maintain and Recover Good Health

So let's turn to self-care. This is where your willingness to take responsible steps to be healthy really matters. Everything listed here is easy and low cost, but adopting them does demand that you take charge. This is what an acupuncturist like me

will want you to do, and that is how you will improve your health and save money at the same time. Here are some recommendations.

- Establish Regularity

This is one of the simplest, cheapest ways to be well. All it demands is that you figure out a time budget and stick to it. Healthy bodies thrive on regularity. Therefore, go to bed at the same time every night, and rise at the same time each morning—7-8 hours of sleep/day. Try to have a bowel movement at about the same time every day. Eat at regular times—at least 3 times a day (do not skip meals). Exercise regularly too—minimum 30 minutes per day, and three times a week at least 60 minutes of a solid work-out. If you live with others, do your best to ensure that they also become regular. Regularity helps children be calm, grow better and do better in school. Regularity makes work and family activity planning easier and more predictable. I know we often have hectic lives, but this is more by choice than by necessity. Work to develop regularity in your life as a step in your self-healing plan.

- Exercise

There is hardly any health-promoting action more important than moving your body! Just as it thrives on regularity, your body thrives on movement. Shake it up! It hardly matters how you move, but be sure you move. Start slow if you need to, but be serious about movement. It will save your joints, clear your blood vessels, open your mind and heart, improve your digestion and breathing, and strengthen your bones. And

Examples of Conditions I've Treated

- Allergies, asthma, COPD, bronchitis, common cold, immune deficiency
- Sinusitis, TMJ, toothache, facial tic, facial paralysis, facial pain
- Eczema, acne, psoriasis
- Arthritis, polymyalgia rheumatica, similar conditions
- Musculoskeletal pain like sciatica, lower back pain, knee, ankle, foot pain; finger, wrist, elbow pain, shoulder and neck pain, headache of all kinds, scoliosis
- Painful scars
- Reynaud's syndrome, MS, other circulatory and neuropathologies
- Stress, fatigue, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, hypothyroidism, adrenal fatigue
- Insomnia, anger, grief, anxiety, panic, depression
- Constipation, diarrhea, IBS, Crohn's disease, GERD, hiatal hernia, abdominal cramping
- Urinary bladder discomfort, hemorrhoids, anal pain
- Menstrual cramps, PMS, menopause symptoms
- Infertility, uterine fibroids
- Aging: osteoporosis, enlarged prostate, high blood pressure, deficiencies...
- Cancer-treatment supportive care

mostly, it's free! If you 'don't like exercise,' study Tai qi or qi gung instead!

- Eat a Health-promoting Diet

It's pretty simple but apparently rarely achieved: eat FRESH WHOLE food, not packaged, prepared, artificial or preserved stuff. Emphasize fresh vegetables, fruits and nuts/seeds, use complex carbohydrates rather than simple ones, consume quality oils like olive oil and butter, and don't overdose on meat.

Avoid sugar and sugar substitutes. Sugar, and simple carbohydrate foods, act like drugs in the body, straining digestion, particularly the pancreas. The effects of a high-sugar diet show up first as nervousness and jitteriness, later on as high triglycerides, a tubby belly, and eventually as osteoporosis, diabetes,

and other so-called 'diseases of old age'. So what does it mean to 'avoid sugar'? People insist, 'I don't use sugar!' and indeed they do avoid sodas, pastries, and the granulated stuff. But you will still be jam-packed with what the body receives as 'sugar' if you eat white bread, white flour products, white potatoes, pasta, chips, granola bars, protein bars, fruit juice, milk, and/or breakfast cereal. Wow! What can you do? Go back to the previous paragraph and focus on FRESH WHOLE food! *If you make it yourself, then you are in charge* of what you eat, and *that*, my friends, is the act of a person who wants to be healthy *and* wants to save money!

- Use Enzyme Supplements If You are Stressed, Unwell, or Over 40

Enzymes are chemicals that make your metabolism 'go'—

they change one chemical to another in the body. Enzymes *provide energy to the body*. You thought it was vitamins and minerals? Sorry, no! When a person is stressed or sick, their need for enzymes rises. And as we age we produce less of most enzymes, become less efficient at digesting our food or carrying out metabolic processes. Both situations can be helped by enzyme supplementation.

See an enzyme specialist for help with enzyme supplementation. The Loomis system (www.loomisinstitute.com) has developed a sophisticated range of enzyme-herb combinations that can address almost any physical or emotional complaint. Because of the presence of the enzymes, the herbs can be given in very small quantities, so treatments can be helpful even to people who are sensitive. *Properly matched to the person's needs*, enzymes are powerful and remarkably inexpensive. Like Chinese herbal remedies, in some cases they can *replace* expensive pharmaceuticals.

- Use Nutritional Supplements

Unfortunately, our food supply is not as nutritionally rich as it once was. Thus nearly everyone is wise to take nutritional supplements—vitamins, minerals, co-enzymes like Co-Q10, and so on. But there are two things to remember, and good reason to consult an expert for help at least once. 1. *Not all supplements are of equal quality*. The cheapest ones, from drug and grocery stores, are usually of low bioavailability, that is, your body can't absorb them. If you spend \$10 on a bottle of vitamins, and can only absorb \$1 worth, you have wasted \$9.



Acupuncture photo : Jacob Wackerhausen

Much better to spend a little more up front and get a quality brand! Quality brands have no additives or colorants, and are combined using either amino acids or a special substance called FOS—read the label! 2. *It is no use taking something you don't need*. That's wasteful and creates stress for your body as it struggles to detoxify excess. So, see a specialist who can guide you toward a limited set of products that serve your *personal* needs well.

True Stories of Successful Inexpensive AcuCare

A woman returned from doing charity work in a third world country with a raging uterine infection, and intestinal parasites that had not responded to antibiotic treatment. I treated her with 2 sessions of acupuncture and one large bottle of an enzyme combination aimed at combating bacterial and parasitic infections. She was well before her biomedical practitioner could see her.

A woman complained of chron-

ic cold feet, and a hot knee after surgery. She was told that 'nothing was wrong.' Only three sessions of acupuncture cleared up her knee pain and as her knee cooled, her feet warmed up.

A man complained of plantar fasciitis, for which he'd received several months of biomedical care. I provided 2 sessions of acupuncture and he reported there was no more pain or disability.

A man had a 15-year-old scar on his ankle that was causing blood to pool in his foot, which made it difficult for him to play sports. It took about 6 sessions of acupuncture to release this scar and improve foot circulation. Then he could play again.

A woman complained of bladder pain. She had a ten year old Cesarean scar which was still sore. In two treatments the pain in the scar dissipated and her bladder pain largely went with it.

A woman complained of migraine headaches about twice a month, which were not controlled by pharmaceuticals. I provided a Chinese herbal combination which successfully reduced the frequency of headaches to about 2 per year. Her only continuing cost is the herbs—about \$225 every 6 months.

Bottom Line: Don't Stop Getting Medical Care! But Do Be Smart About Choosing!

In this column I've tried to show why it is cost-smart to use acupuncture and supplement care, and emphasized how health-promoting it is to partner with your acupuncturist and *take charge of your own*

health care. Even people with chronic conditions can benefit from these suggestions, and by taking charge you can decrease your anxiety while saving your pocketbook. Good luck, and call me with your questions!

**To learn more about acupuncture research, see www.acupunctureresearch.org,*

www.acupunctureresearch.org. www.medicalacupuncture.org, the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine (www.liebert.com/acm), or ecam.oxfordjournals.org. To find practitioners, see www.acufinder.com. You can also peruse the pages of Pathways for local acupuncturists or go to their site at www.pathwaysmagzine.com.

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