

# Notes From Aculand

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## To your physical, mental, and spiritual health!

by Karen Johnson L.Ac., R.N.

**In my nursing days**, I would read journals to learn about the latest practices in medical care and was occasionally stymied by the treatment summary that went something like, “The surgery was successful, but the patient died two days later.”

This is an extreme statement but serves my purpose in highlighting a fundamental difference in evaluating the effectiveness of acupuncture treatments relative to standard medical treatments. There are things acupuncture is designed to do that are similar, but also different from what medical treatments are designed to do. An acupuncturist treats a person, not a symptom or disease. Traditional medical care is designed to address specific symptoms. Traditional scientific testing methods, as we mentioned last month, focus on objective, duplicative, standardized and typically very, very physical results. How effectively did “X” procedure or medication work for “X” number of patients, and what were the other consequences or side effects of the treatment. Something that’s absent from this kind of study is the understanding that injury and illness happen in the context of a whole life, a

whole person. As shown by a new measurement tool, the MYOMOP (measure your own medical outcomes profile), patients themselves rate effectiveness of treatment by an array of not-so-easily –defined factors.

“Patients suffer not only from their primary symptoms, but also from the results and effects of their illnesses, such as depression and changes in their relationships. For the patient, symptoms often hold much meaning beyond physical sensation. A recurrence can have other unpleasant results, such as additional trips to doctors, paying for medications, time off from work, not being able to play with



children, or changes in relationships with family members. In many cases, the anxiety and depression surrounding the symptoms causes suffering which are greater than the suffering



caused by the physical symptoms directly. These factors also change how the ill individual interacts socially, thereby reducing social support and resulting in a downward spiral of suffering.” (*Stibich, Alternative Therapies, Mar/Apr 2006*)

Another study I found (*Paterson, Family Practice Journal, Oct 1997*), compared patients who received care from general medical practitioners and alternative health practitioners, including acupuncturists. Both sets of patients used the MYOMOP tool to evaluate their results and while both sets reported statistically significant improvements in their symptoms, the patients of the complementary care providers scored greater for a change in “well being.”

In another study conducted by Paterson, (*Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, Oct 2003*) designed to assess the use of acupuncture for people with chronic illness, it was noted that, “In addition to changes in their

presenting symptoms people experienced whole-person effects that were characterized by changes in strength and energy, and changes in personal and social identity. These effects were distinct but not divisible because of their interdependence and their complex and individual development over time.” This is an aspect of health not often measured in the usually referenced scientific studies.

The virtue of patient centered, as opposed to scientifically standardized, measurement tools, is

that people themselves measure success in roughly five areas: reduction in symptoms, reduction in disability, reduction in, or avoidance of medication, gaining control and improving coping skills, and securing support and hope through the patient-practitioner relationship.

These statements and studies support what most of us who have had acupuncture know, but may not have put into words; our whole lives change. We come through the door wanting relief

from some sort of discomfort. We may leave not only more comfortable, but feeling better all around. Sometimes nothing else in our world changes, but we feel healthier somehow. Sometimes we start making necessary changes in our world.

These things are hard to quantify, but then again, so is life. Acupuncture deals with the dynamic movement that is the nature of human existence. So a good evaluation tool should allow for the human experience to be expressed.

## Gift of Wellness

The holidays are coming and what better gift to give than the gift of health! Gift certificates can be purchased for individual massages or acupuncture treatments. If you want to start a friend or family member on the road to improved health with acupuncture, I

recommend purchasing the “acupak,” which is a series of three acupuncture treatments beginning with the full intake interview and establishment of treatment goals as well as the treatment itself. Purchase of the “pak” entitles you to a \$25.00 discount. The lucky recipient just needs to call to make an appointment!



## Eat, Drink and Be Merry!

To protect yourself or your loved ones naturally during the cold and flu prone winter months, consider some nutritional supplements. I have taken them for years and count on their protective effect to keep me well while I treat folks suffering from the assortment of respiratory problems that tend to accompany the winter months. For almost anyone, I would recommend the isotonic multimineral and vitamin with iron (unless there is a reason or personal preference not to have the iron) and OPC-3. The need for vitamins and minerals has been well established and even with a good diet, which I hope you pursue, it's hard to get a full component of quality nutrition. Supplementation makes sure you are covered. The OPC product is less well known, but it is a highly effective antioxidant. Antioxidants are an increasingly popular



component of a healthy diet.

Very simply, “oxidative stress” in the body is much like rusting of metal on a car. Breakdown of cells, a naturally occurring process stemming from stress, overwork, illness, poor diet, etc. travels along in a domino like effect, starting and then continuing to damage neighboring areas. Oxidative stress in the body is thought to contribute to a wide array of illnesses from fatigue, colds and flu, edema and

inflammation to a variety of autoimmune and chronic conditions. Most dietary recommendations include, rightfully, an increase in fresh fruits and vegetables, and a decrease in fast or commercially prepared food. But again, even with the best intentions, in our busy world, it's hard to do the right thing all the time. So, a little help can make a big difference. (\* OPC's should not be taken if you are on chemotherapeutics or taking a blood thinner.)

The products can be purchased from my website ([karenjohnson.nutrametrix.com](http://karenjohnson.nutrametrix.com)) and delivered to your home or picked up at my office. I also recommend the calcium, especially for women and the vitamin C if you are traveling or are especially prone to colds.