



ACUPUNCTURE HELPS RELAX FEARFUL DENTAL PATIENTS

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Not many people enjoy visiting the dentist. In fact, it's estimated that as many as 75 percent of adults experience some degree of real fear and anxiety about dental treatment.

But a small percentage — less than 10 percent — are almost paralyzed with anxiety and fear at even the thought of it. These people suffer from a “condition” variously called dentophobia or odontophobia —severe fear of dentistry — and they will do almost anything to avoid dental treatmentaltogether.

Up until now, sedatives and tranquilizers have been the most usual approach to overcome dental anxieties. But such drugs bring with them many unwanted side effects.

Less toxic approaches have included special relaxation techniques, behavioral therapies, biofeedback, and even hypnosis — all hit-or-miss, sometimes not covered by insurers, and in the case of hypnosis, not without some potential for negative side effects.

Now, a small but significant British study, published in *Acupuncture in Medicine*, has found that Acupuncture can deliver significant benefits for patients suffering such anxieties. Sixteen women and four men from eight dental practices, each moderately or extremely anxious about dental treatment, took part in the study. All were in their 40s, and had been trying to deal with this problem for between two and thirty years.

The Back Anxiety Inventory (BAI), a validated questionnaire, was assessed before and after five minutes of Acupuncture treatment at the points GV20 and EX6 on the top of the head. The Acupuncture was carried out by the dentists, all members of the British Dental Acupuncture Society.

The average BAI score of 26.5 before Acupunture treatment fell to 11.5 after Acupunture treatment. Even better, all 20 patients were able to undergo their planned dental treatment. Before the Acupunture, only 6 of the patients had ever allowed themselves to have dental treatment, and in some cases only partially and after great effort by both patient and dentist.

The study authors recommend larger studies to confirm their findings; meanwhile, they say that Acupunture “may offer a simple and inexpensive method of treatment.”

Acupuncture in Medicine is a quarterly scientific and clinical journal aimed at Western-trained physicians and other health professionals, and is published by the British Medical Journal.

SOURCE: Medical News Today, <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/184018.php>