



Solutions through stimulation

Therapist **Ros Barresi** shares the virtues of auricular acupuncture in addressing addictions

Fact file
Auricular acupuncture is a diagnostic and treatment system based on normalising the body's dysfunction through stimulation of definite points on the ear.

quite strongly. It can however be used as a tonic to these organs that have gone through tough times. So, even after one has given up smoking, a continuation of ear acupuncture is important in the after care until the lungs begin to feel as if they are coming back to life.

Calming

When needles are in the ear, the person is to sit in a chair and meditate, eyes closed and listen to relaxing music to slow the body down. This enables the body to be relaxed, helping the person to continue this state of mind. This should be the tool that leads the individual to not want to use again or smoke. Needles can stay in up to 40 minutes and the number of sessions can vary.

Other benefits

Auricular acupuncture has a great effect on many other conditions as well. It can help with depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as well as addictions. Very rarely does one have a reaction but when they do it can cause a headache or slight nauseous feeling. If a pregnant woman has ear acupuncture, then the first point sympathetic is very near the uterus point so this is usually avoided. Possibility of pregnancy, along with age and lifestyle, should be part of the pre-treatment questionnaire. I feel confident it can help people with all kinds of addictions but, sadly, there remains a lack of awareness among GP practices of the benefits of this complementary therapy. It could have such a great effect without any invasiveness or contra-indications. There is also a lot of fear of needles and the management of patients is important in the process.

My experience of working in substance misuse initially as a massage therapist, led me to train in ear acupuncture five years ago. I was so amazed at how this treatment worked having received it many times when working with offenders and drug users as part of their treatment programme. So, I enrolled on a course in April 2010 in London with NADA, (National Auricular Detoxification Association) and slowly began to use it in places where I worked such as bail hostels and drug and alcohol treatment services. I began using the treatment on a regular basis with Lifeline Project in 2012 where I

used it on the 12-Step programme and generally for service users in groups and in one to ones. It has great results when used as a tool, but it should not be expected to cure someone of an addiction.

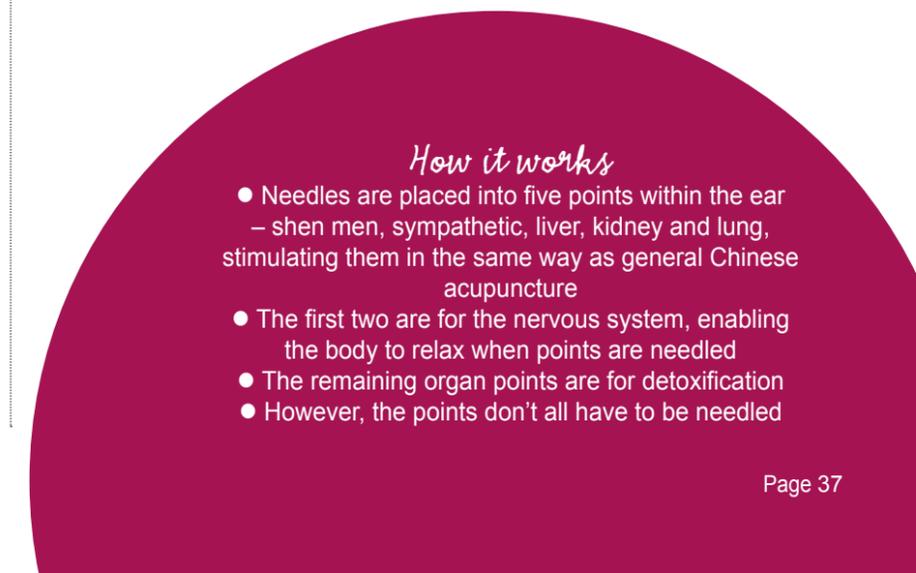
Smokers

I have worked with many people with addictions, many of whom are smokers. When the lung point is needed, 80% of the time it hurts and the person will flinch. Smokers are generally affected in their lungs. When I needle the point for the lung it generally hurts the person and



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this can mean their lungs are congested. With a smoker the whole upper body can be tense as the lungs are put through so much without realising. The lungs are not able to relax and open up generally and so congestion can build up and cause problems so the person cannot get enough oxygen or open up as much as they should. Breathing should come from the diaphragm and not the upper respiratory tract. When the lungs are full they cannot function as best as they should. When working with addicts of harder drugs or alcohol, the liver point can be affected. If the person has hepatitis or cirrhosis of the liver again the point can be painful or felt



How it works

- Needles are placed into five points within the ear – shen men, sympathetic, liver, kidney and lung, stimulating them in the same way as general Chinese acupuncture
- The first two are for the nervous system, enabling the body to relax when points are needed
- The remaining organ points are for detoxification
- However, the points don't all have to be needed