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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TCM TO THE RESCUE! TO INTEGRATE WITH WESTERN MEDICINE TO HELP TREAT PAIN IN THE USA AND STOP THE OPIOID CRISIS!

*Dr. Isa-Allean Blacksher, N.D.

China

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*Corresponding author:

Dr. Isa-Allean Blacksher, N.D.

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ABSTRACT

Pain is often a major aspect of most patient's health problems. It is not uncommon that doctors try to look for the best way to care for and treat their patients to make them comfortable by resolving these pain issues. Patients also look for the fastest and most effective ways to eliminate their pain to find relief from their discomforts. With this strong need for pain management, opioids have been the answer for many years and are being heavily prescribed by western doctors; unfortunately addiction problems have occurred. Although opioids effectively numb pain and give relief, they are also extremely dangerous and highly addictive! Many times opioids are even ethically misused, over prescribed, abused and systematically wrongly applied and now for the western medical system this is now very hard to control. A better treatment option is needed for what has turned into an epidemic as it gets worse with the increase of opioid prescriptions, consequently there are more people dying now in America due to opioid overdose than in traffic accidents! So, with so many suffering from pain in the mainstream US health care system and now from addiction from taking highly addictive opium-based pain killers the new challenge of trying to find a better form of treatment has arisen but has yet to be solved. Common sense tells us that exchanging the problem of chronic pain for the deadlier problem of having a prescription opioid addiction - is no solution at all. So what is a better solution for pain management? Integrative medicine combining the powers of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Acupuncture along with western medicine is. **The Simple Fact:** TCM is better for treating pain, this is a simple fact, and truthfully, since the root of the real illness in many patients is not really being addressed or rectified this reveals that using opioids to treat pain is not the most intelligent system for treating a health problem - it is just a temporary fix. In fact, instead of helping, this system is leading millions to become dependent to solving their health issues with a highly addictive substance and this is leading to the development of a deadly cycle. The cycle of pain and illness, medicating with opioid medication, leading to addiction pain. Repeat... pain, opioids, addiction - pain, repeat...and the cycle goes on and on - usually continuing until overdose. In 1999 there were 4,000 deaths attributed to opioid prescription painkillers and by 2011 that number more than tripled to 14,000 and that is more patients dying than overdose from the people on the street using street drugs like cocaine and heroin combined - in 2014 death from opioids rose again to 18,893. These figures show that from 1999 to 2015 over half a million Americans have died from overdosing on opioid prescription drugs - these statistics are according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and because of this the whole situation is now being labeled as "an opioid crisis" and an "overdose epidemic." Presently this cycle of addiction to opioids has contributed to the degeneration of a whole nation of people, their families and their communities, struggle to find a balance with opioid pain medications - where there is none.

INTRODUCTION

STOP THIS CRISIS!

Medical practitioners, Pharmaceutical companies and government officials have had to stand up and take responsibility for this crisis. They have realized that they need to find a better, more ethical way to treat pain instead of continuing handing out opioid pain drugs to patients. Chances are, that every patient prescribed opioids will become addicted and possible die from an overdose if they don't find a better solution for treating pain. The saddest aspect of the opioid crisis is that in the majority of the cases the patients are not even getting their original medical problem rectified - this reveals shadier aspects of the problem that focus on the fact that finding medical solution for their issue is not the priority,

but giving them a quick fix is - this shows that ethically morals need adjusting in this situation. A pain solution is what patients are looking for but they are instead being assisted in developing an opioid addiction, why? Of course the answer is MONEY!

Money for Pharmaceutical companies, doctors, hospitals, e-pharma companies, and even illegal street sellers who are all profiting from this opioid addiction in the 100 billions annually turn their head away from the facts, while innocent people are being drawn into a massive situation - families and friends are watching their loved ones become opioid addicts and their lives are being destroyed. Why has it taken 20 years to address this issue! The truth is that it has actually taken 20 years of calculated strategy to develop this deliberate opioid crisis - those that profit don't want it to stop now. It's time to look at

the ethical details behind this situation. New evidence and successful lawsuits against big pharma companies ^[1] have exposed the complicated conspiracy behind opioid crisis linking the situation's origins to shady pharmaceutical companies with financial motives and greedy doctors that push these opioid drugs into the hands of as many patients as they can. With misleading advertisements and information on opioids stating that they have a less than 1% addiction risk – these ads are implying that opioids are relatively safe. Doctors and hospitals collaborate with Big Pharma companies and have done so for many years, this is because they financially benefit through large bonuses and payouts up in the millions to push pharmaceutical drugs – in the end the pharma companies also profit annually with profit amounts reaching up into the billions quickly and easily. ^[2] Ethically a better way for doing business needs to evolve, and a smarter way for treating pain has to be developed; if these to elements are reformed it will solve most of the opioid crisis. The government has realized this and is now getting involved after so many concerned citizens have demanded that something be done; the government is feeling the pressure, as hundreds per day die and thousands more become addicted to opioids. Especially since these are not all poor or disenfranchised people, but are many rich and affluent people of American!

The saddest part of this whole epidemic is that the US government doesn't have to look hard to find a better way to treat pain – they just have to accept the alternatives and TCM acupuncture is a SOLID alternative option that will provide a better answer to treating the pain. Acupuncture is a great option and can provide effective, safe pain treatments and will continue to be a suitable option treating pain effectively for many years to come! This is because TCM is a true, honest, righteous, chemical-free pain treatment system. So who can help resolve this opioid crisis TCM CAN! Who can save people from their pain and suffering now? TCM acupuncture can! Can this help to resolve the opioid crisis? Yes it can!

TCM to the rescue!

TCM Acupuncture can help with pain, treatment of pain is one of Acupuncture's strongest abilities. Acupuncturists can easily give several types of pain treatments including local, distal, general or even deep enough to perform surgery successfully without patients feeling pain. TCM's methods are better for eliminating pain because they are totally natural, chemical-free and non-addictive, and the bonus is they can also eliminate the root cause of the pain, in many cases, to stop the cycle of pain and addiction and provide health support and homeostasis to patients in need. This is a better system; this is what governments, doctors and patients have been looking for and it can even help with the drug addiction itself by alleviating addiction symptoms directly and helping patients with Post-Acute Withdrawal Symptoms (PAWS) from the opioids. TCM can be there to help patients get through. All of these strengths of acupuncture make it a winning option.

¹ How the American opiate epidemic was started by one pharmaceutical company Retrieved from url Theweek.com/articles/541564/how-american-opiate-epidemic-started-by-pharmaceutical-company
² How the American opiate epidemic was started by one pharmaceutical company Retrieved from url Theweek.com/articles/541564/how-american-opiate-epidemic-started-by-pharmaceutical-company

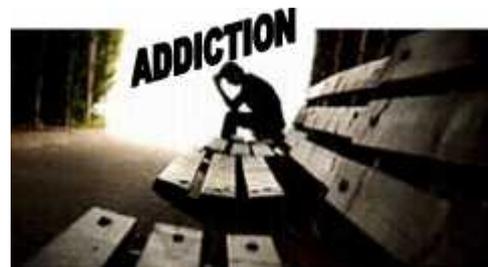
Opioid withdrawals

It is known that opioids cause one of the most severe types of withdrawals that can last for weeks, months and even years for some.



Opioid withdrawals symptoms include

- Muscle aches
- Runny nose
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Loss of Appetite
- Insomnia
- Goosebumps (cold turkey)
- Cold sweats
- Anxiety
- Mood swings



- Depression
- Strong Irritation
- Fatigue
- The withdrawals of opium are both physical and psychological.^[3]



Figure 4. The poppy flower

³ Opium Withdrawals Symptoms Opium.com/withdrawal/long-opium-withdrawal-last

History of opium and opioid pain killers

Opium comes from the very beautiful Poppy flower, *papaver somniferum* that originated in Asia; here it is looking very innocent. This flower's seed is the source of the deadly alkaloid extract that makes heroin, morphine and all the opioids that are now killing people with overdose and destroying so many families. With its addictive power, the seed of this beautiful flower is threatening the stability of USA and straining the foundation of its' health care system, ^[4] this innocent poppy flower is at the center of this devastating epidemic. Scientific research reveals that this simple flower can produce 80 alkaloids that can be used to reduce pain.



Figure 5. How opioids travel

The history of opioid usage is long, in 3400BC it was cultivated in Mesopotamia, the Sumerians called it "Hul Gil" the "Joy Plant" and it started showing up on record from the Neolithic times - till now – centuries later with its' devastating effects on civilization. The historical involvement with the poppy flower actually first dates back to it being used as an anesthesia and for ritualistic purposes – its effects were considered mystical and magical. The Minoan culture in Crete even had a goddess dedicated to her.



Figure 6. Opioid goddess

Cultivation knowledge was passed down through the Assyrians, Babylonians and ultimately to the Egyptians who were cultivating it in 1300B.C. and they eventually traded it all over the Middle East and into Europe where it ended up under British control.^[5] In ancient Egypt it was also used as a pain reliever and the East Indians and the Romans both used it for surgical procedures. China also has a special history with

opium and their problems date back to the 1500s. Chinese were one of the first cultures to discover opium's medicinal powers and also first to realize that it can cause serious addiction; the rest of the world was not far behind to realize its dangers.^[6]



China went to war with Britain in 1800's over opium, these "Opium wars" were heated; in fact China fought to protect their people and defend their nation from Britain, who was focused on forcing opium into China as an import because they knew of the addictive powers of this substance and lucrative advantages of trading the substance.



Figure 7. The opium wars

Britain wanted continued trade with the Chinese because china had many desirable items that Britain wanted, so the British forced irresistible opium on these people because they didn't have much else that Chinese were interested in trading for. Unfortunately even after 2 wars China could not stop Britain from importing this lucrative substance and eventually it flooded China and unfortunately one in four Chinese was soon totally addicted and smoked it regularly. With this in mind, now in modern China there is a strong disdain for opium and all drugs, drug addicts and drug addiction because as a country, they know it can weaken the core strengths of their people and culture. Due to this China has one of the strictest bans on drugs and they use a superior police monitoring system and intervention unlike any in the world to make sure *their* citizens "get clean" with treatment and avoid drug addiction entirely.^[7]

⁴ Poppy.com the poppy plant

⁵ History Opium, Morphine and Heroin Retrieved from url www.intheknowzone.com/substance-abuse-topics/heroin/history.html

⁶ The History of Opium Retrieved from url Opium.com

⁷ Chinese drug laws: Police-controlled approach to drug abuse

Due to their past, Chinese now know the dangers of opium and drug addiction and don't want this history repeating again or their people becoming common drug addicts or even importers or dealers of drugs on the black market; in fact even a small amount can quickly result in the death sentence in their country. This winning strategy has insured a very low drug usage in China [8].



Figure 8. Opium use in ancient china

Where it comes from and who is using it

Although certain countries avoid this drug, 700 tons of opium are still being produced annually and 75% of this world supply comes from Afghanistan. Statistical analysis shows that USA leads the way as the highest consumers - leading at 80 % consumption of all medical opioids prescribed annually^[9]; this equals approximately 300 million pain prescriptions which is equivalent to 24 billion dollars. When US totals are combined with other western countries like Canada, Europe and Britain, the total rises to 95% leaving only a 5% percent consumption rate of opioids in the rest of the non-western nations in the world^[10].

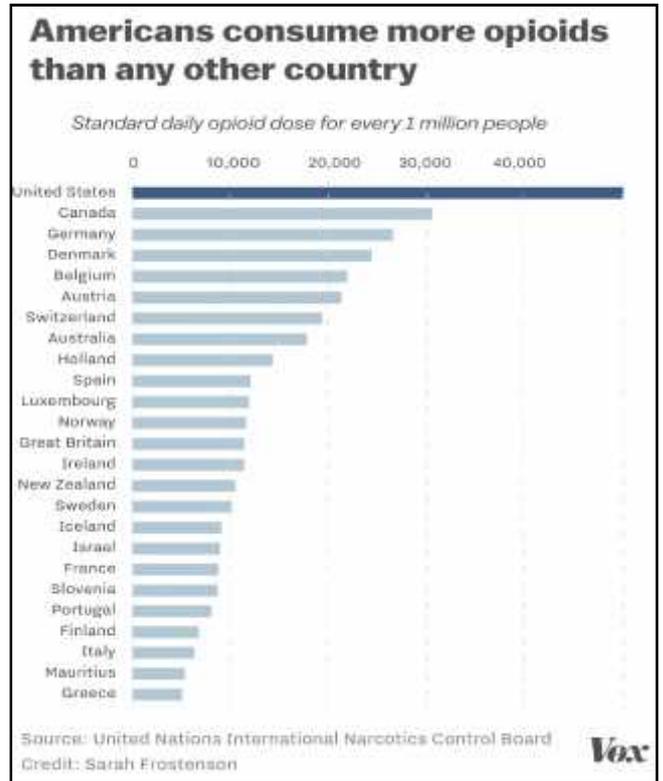
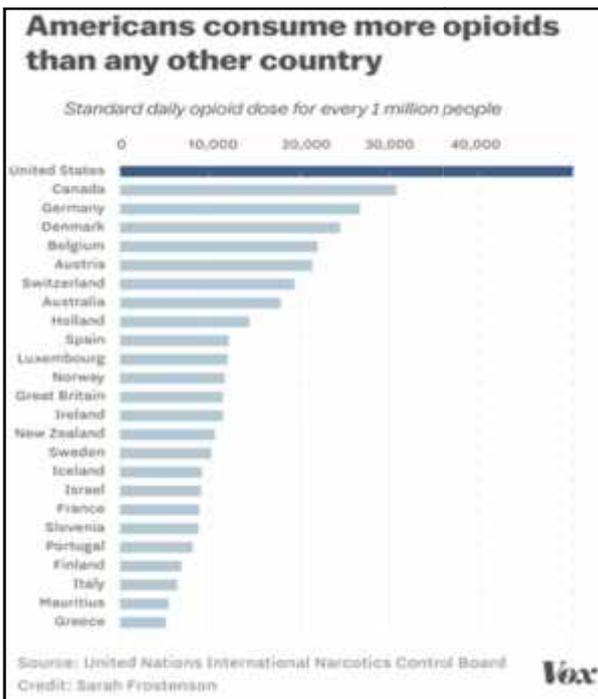


Figure 10. Americans consume more opioids than the rest of the world

Why are westerners using so many opioid pain killers? Is it because they are suffering from more pain? The American population only makes up 5% of the global population but they still have the highest rates of opioid consumption in the world population. [11] This is a question that needs to be contemplated by the US population. Unlike the US, in other countries prescription opioid use is limited to being used for very acute hospitalization and trauma circumstances only; even in hospital settings medical practitioners around the world are disinclined to hand out opioids prescriptions the way Americans doctors do - this is due to the known risks involved. Seeing the imbalance in user statistics, now several US authorities are trying to conform and they have begun informing patients about the dangers of careless medical staff handing out opioid prescriptions too easily [12]. A century ago, back in 1909 the international opium commission was formed to try to regulate opium. It was during this time that opium first started being chemically processed into morphine and heroin. Making many medications like this one...

By 1923, the US had banned heroin and since that time it has been illegal to use, sell and manufacture there prior to that their were no such laws. Now it is considered a "scheduled 1 controlled substance" and considered extremely dangerous. By the 20th century opium was also prohibited in many other countries as well and regulations were set up to help keep opium and opiates guarded and only available by prescription because officials realized they had a serious problem on their hands - but that opioids did have a functional use for medicinal application.

www.drugabuse.gov/international/abstracts/chinese/-drug-laws-police-controlled-approachto-drug-abuse
⁸ 5 Countries With Shockingly Severe Drug Laws Retrieved from url www.pacsafe.com/blog/5-countries-with-shockingly-severe-drug-laws.html
⁹ December 2014 Express Script Report USA
¹⁰ CNBE, Americans consume vast majority of the world's opioids april 2016

¹¹ Vikesh Singh Assistant Professor of medicine and Director of the Pancreatitis center at Johns Hopkins University,
¹² Why Do Doctors Prescribe Opiates if Opiate Addiction is Possible? Retrieved from url www.opiate.com/why-do-doctors-prescribe-opiates-if-opiate-addiction-is-possible/

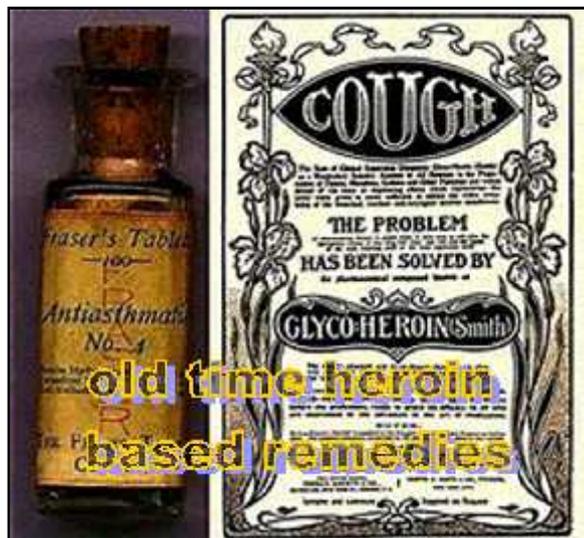


Figure 11. Opium use in the 1900's

This reform appeared to be constructive, but it turns out that guarding and controlling opioid prescriptions unfortunately led to other problems, like prescription thievery, forgery and mishandling. The rights of legal prescription holders are now being violated by those without, and those with legitimate need for the drug are out of luck because there is a shortage of access when supplies are mishandled. Corruption of doctors is another consequence of the tight laws, causing medical professionals to cave into the pressure of drug addicts in need of “a fix” – in exchange for money. Reform of prescriptions for these drugs has also led to a bigger problem of doctors and pharmaceutical companies creating sneakier ways to validate the need for prescription opiates for all types of patients that may not even need them. They have done this to broaden the range of opioids applicable uses, leading to this new crisis which is the misuse of opioids in patients that don't even need them and cannot truly benefit from their effects.

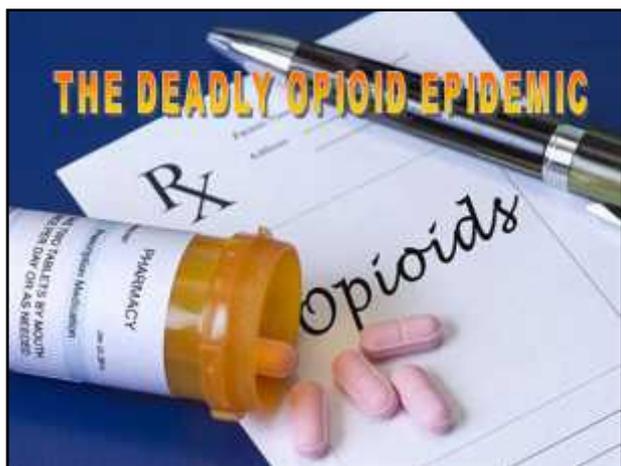


Figure 12. Over prescription of opioids

Sadly, despite all of the regulations and laws in place opium is still being misused by millions. It is known that doctors are “over-prescribing opioids” and that patients have an insatiable craving for them, so patients have even started “doctor shopping” which involves going to several different doctors and several different pharmacies to keep a steady flow of prescriptions so that they can continue to abuse these opioids. To combat this the government has even had to create a new system called “Lock-in” - this is to stop prescription

manipulation and limit patients to only seeing one doctor and going to one pharmacy at a time to stop this type of prescription abuse, but it still continues. Prescription regulations on opioids were previously so loose that the US government agency Center of Disease Control (CDC) had to create new guidelines for prescribing opioids for doctors and require that they also educate patients from overusing opioids to prevent misuse. But CDC stated that these guidelines are not mandated by law which still makes them easy for doctors to ignore.

This crisis wasn't an accident

Sadly this crisis isn't accidental. This epidemic was generated in the USA and Canada over 2 decades ago starting in the late 1990's. It was by design and strong influence of Big pharma companies, pushing for sales, over-prescribing, broadened opioid application and having doctors share misinformation with patients about opioid drugs.

Pharmaceutical opioids are so dangerous that patients are turning to street heroin instead

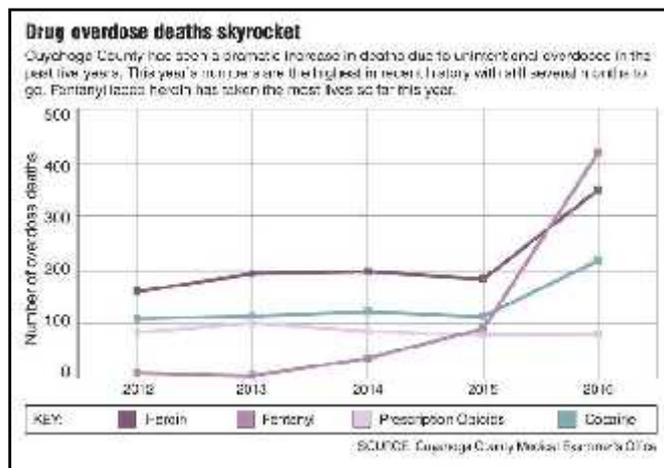


Figure 13. Opioids are dangerous

Some patients have realized the danger involved with pharmaceutical opioids and also due to the difficulties of getting them users have started switching to street heroin and heroin mixes instead, this is startling. Factually, pharma opioids mixed with street heroin is so strong that the rate of overdose has increased from this trend and more are now dying from these illegal street drugs mixtures.



Figure 15. Street heroin/ another opium product that kills

TCM as an alternative

On the other hand, TCM prescriptions for acupuncture are safe because they are based on the individual patient and cannot be used to receive any chemical pharmaceuticals— this makes acupuncture prescription safe from fraud.



Figure 17. Nccaom the national certification commission for acupuncture and oriental medicine

NCCAOM is the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, it is the US agency dedicated to assuring safety and well-being of the public in relation to their practice of professional Acupuncture and Oriental medicine. While promoting high efficacy with evidence-based standards and systems of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), this agency represent TCM in an ethical way. Due to their involvement and this new “Roadmap for action” against the opioid crisis, only the highest standards concerning the inclusion of TCM will be utilized.^[15]

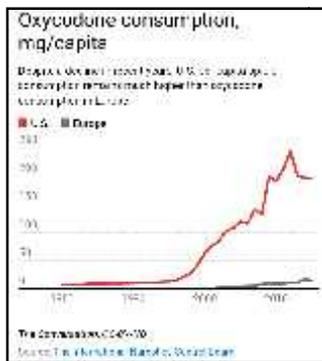
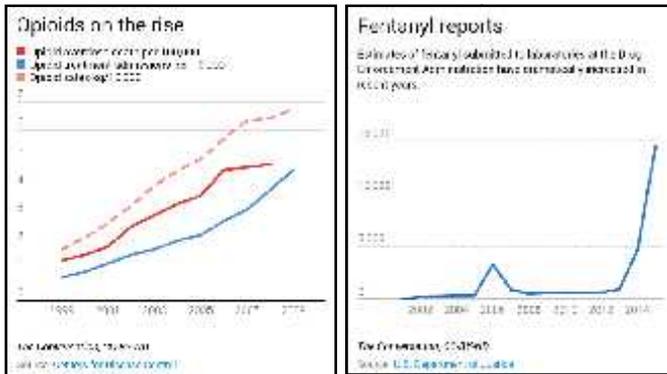


Figure 16 - 3 Graphs charts showing prescription opioid Statistical use data^[13]

The street drug heroin is strong, but sadly, new opioid drugs like Carfentanil, Fentanyl and Oxycodone are all on the rise. Carfentanil is one of the strongest prescription opioids, even stronger than Fentanyl which is an opioid elephant tranquilizer.

So many dying

With hundreds dying per day in America, many angry citizens, ex-addicts and families of decease addicts have sent complaints and heartfelt concerns to government leaders and hospitals. This has sparked the need for officials to start looking for better ways to combat pain and tackle opioid misuse. The government officials are insistent on finding acceptable, effective, alternatives for pain treatments so they have united forces as of June 20, 2018 with the non-profit organization NCCAOM creating the official “Roadmap for action.”^[14]

Opioid facts

- 100 -115 people die daily in USA - due to opioid overdose
- 60% of these drug overdoses are due to opioid drugs
- 50% of those drugs are prescription drugs

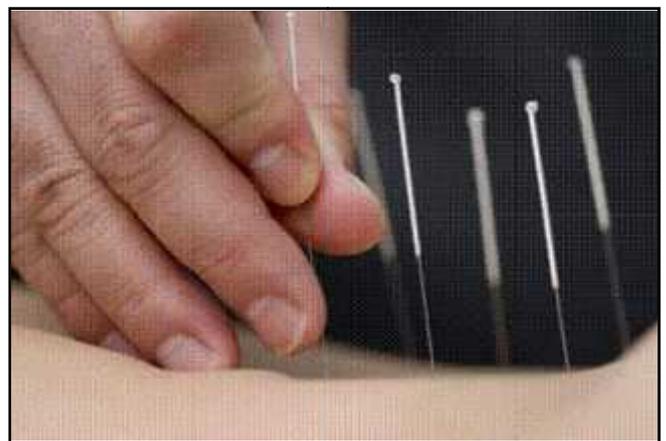


Figure 18. Effective Acupuncture

Acupuncture for pain

In this situation, TCM Acupuncture is being assigned a mighty role during this opioid crisis, Acupuncturists are being asked to assist with viable alternative pain treatments that are either “complementary or integrative.” The US government really wants a method that can work alongside western medicine to control pain and help fight the ever growing addiction. Acupuncture and Electro acupuncture *can* fulfill this role because they are systems that can easily relieve pain by local and distal application - both in the organs as well as in the meridian channels, these systems of acupuncture can also treat several illnesses with evidence-backed treatments methods that are endorsed by the World Health Organization (W.H.O). Also, with thousands of new studies by the Evidence-Based Acupuncture Organization, which provides scientific proof and information to prove the efficacy acupuncture treatments for pain there is more support for sharing the efficacy of acupuncture.^[16, 17, 18]

¹³ all graphs provided by the conversation.com/the-opioid-epidemic-in-6-charts-81601
¹⁴ www.nccaom.org/blog/2018/06/26/comprehensive-roadmap-addressing-opioid-crisis/

¹⁵ www.nccaom.org/about-us/
¹⁶ Traditional Complementary and Integrative medicine Retrieved from url www.who.int/health-topics/Acupuncture/, www.who.int/traditional-complementary-integrative-medicine/en/
¹⁷ Evidence Based Acupuncture
¹⁸ www.evidencebasedacupuncture.org/who-official-position-2/
 Acupuncture: An Overview of Scientific Evidence - Evidence based

USA and NCCAOM together in the fight

NCCAOM CEO Dr. Kory Ward-Kook is now working with the US government to address this issue, as the USA has reached a standstill in other viable options. The government is desperately reaching out for help because they are losing their fight against opioids as millions more are prescribed; people continue dying and becoming addicted daily.

A great Opportunity for TCM

Giving TCM this opportunity to help out the US government and its nation of people during this serious situation is an important opportunity. It is now that TCM experts need to professionally demonstrate Acupuncture's amazing analgesic, pain relieving abilities and take this opportunity seriously. TCM medicine needs to get properly set-up and organized to take the lead as *the* powerful alternative medicine that can assist in stopping the opioid crisis. TCM needs to push its natural, evidenced based methods into the forefront and make a great impact on the world of patients suffering from pain. Acupuncture is one of the *only* effective natural medicines that can actually eliminate pain without involving a chemical medicinal substance. At the same time it is a medicine system that can also eliminate the cause of the pain and so that TCM treatments can also eliminate the long-term need for pain medication and stop the vicious cycle of pain, opioid abuse, and addiction.



Figure 19. A real opioid overdose

This graphic image above is real! It shows a husband and wife overdosing on pain killers in front of their 4-year old child in their car- it was published by the police in an attempt to impact the nation on the seriousness of the crisis. The widespread misuse and addiction *is* unjust and all communities both rich and poor are being hit hard, and this crisis is still on the rise. The graph below shows that prescription pain killers are the leader in overdose deaths now.^[19]

Acupuncture Retrieved from url www.evidencebasedacupuncture.org/present-research/acupuncture-scientific-evidence/

¹⁹ Increases in Drug and Opioid Overdose deaths in United States 2000-2014 Retrieved from url www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6450a3.htm

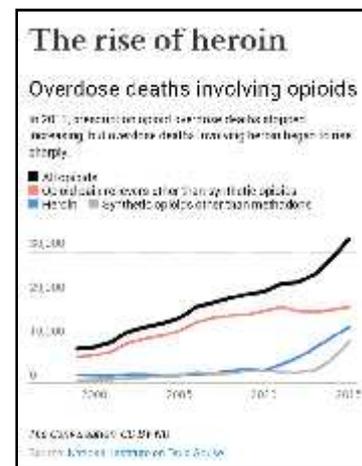


Figure 20. The rise of death statistics and opioids

This addiction crisis is so bad it is shocking, because it is happening in a modern, first-world country that stands for “justice” and involves their prime medical system - problems like this should not exist!



Figure 21. NARCAN a lifesaving treatment for overdose

This Chicago police officer holds a box of NARCAN which has become a normal necessity to help revive addicts. The situation is so bad that these are even being handed out to common citizens to help stop overdoses in progress. NARCAN is a chemical antidote for opioids intoxication that can stop an overdose. It is a great lifesaving tool for helping overdosing addicts but it is NOT the answer to the opioid crisis, in fact some addicts actually complain of how bad they feel after being revived. Here is an actual description from a young drug addict who has been saved 6 times using NARCAN, explaining her feelings post-revival.

This 24-year old female addict remembers...

“Waking up feeling the worst possible case of the flu – (with) old sweats, vomiting, stomach in knots and everything smelling repulsive-and craving another fix(of opioids) to take away the pain caused by the drug withdrawal.

Within hours of being revived
She was using more opioids.”^[20]

Overdosing is a complex physiological moment between being extremely high and death and even though common sense says

²⁰ ²⁰ How Long Should We Keep Reviving Overdosed Drug Addicts? Retrieved from url dispatch.com/news/20170625/how-long-should-we-keep-reviving-overdosed-drug-addicts

that NARCAN is a good option, Acupuncture can assist in reviving those overdosing and it can help immediately rebalance Qi and blood in the body's organs and meridians to alleviate pain and some of the unpleasant side-effects of the overdose from the opioid drug. TCM has ways to revive those that are unconscious, and immediately stimulate their heart, lungs and nervous system to give an option to what is being used now.^[21]

How to treat overdose and addiction with TCM acupuncture

In the case of drug overdose and unconsciousness there are many things that an acupuncturist can do to help them revive. To revive a patient there are certain acupoints that can be heavily stimulated to bring about consciousness and impact the heart from cardiac arrest and even coma.



Figure 22. Shao chong acupoint

J HT 9 – Shao Chong – This point is a special “Jing well point” of the Heart meridian, Jing well points is where the “Qi” energy of that meridian “bubbles up” and it works especially well for reviving consciousness in the body. This point is indicated for heart palpitations, cardiac pain and loss of consciousness especially related to the heart or heart attack which is common in drug overdose patients.²²

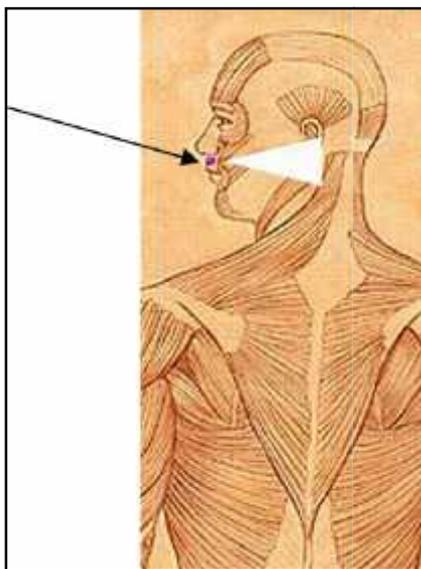


Figure 23. Renzhong acupoint

²¹ How Long Should We Keep Reviving Overdosed Drug Addicts? Retrieved from url dispatch.com/news/20170625/how-long-should-we-keep-reviving-overdosed-drug-addicts

²² HT 9 – acupuncture.com/education/points/heart/ht9.htm

J GV 26 – Renzhong - This point is used often in emergencies and is considered a first-aid point. It can be used to bring humans out of shock, coma, asphyxia, cardiac arrest, heart attack, respiratory arrest and loss of consciousness which are all present during overdose. This point can also help relieve feelings of worry, doubt as well and elevate catecholamine levels increases cardiac output and stroke volume. It also stimulates extra cranial trigeminal nerve fibers and can increase cortical cerebral blood flow to prevent brain damage during overdose.^[23]

Acupuncture and the emotions

For treating addiction TCM has a superior method that involves treating the emotions, because many addicts suffer from emotional pain and imbalance as well. There is an important saying about the 7 emotional factors from the ancient TCM texts in China written by the TCM masters that states...



Figure 23. Yellow emperor

“Too much anger injures the liver,
 Too much fear injures the kidneys,
 Too much sadness injures the lungs
 Too much thinking and worrying injures the spleen an
 Too much joy or excitement injures the heart and
 Too much emotion also injures the heart”

The Divine Pivot

Written in the book Huangdi Neijing - Yellow Emperor’s Inner Cannon

During the 1st century says ...

“The heart is the monarch of the 5 Zang and 6 Fu organs...therefore,

Grief and melancholy also disturb the heart and a disturbance of the heart leads to the affection of the five Zang and 6 Fu organs.”^[24]

The importance of these TCM statements is that they reveal the specific influences of the emotional feelings on the body which relates to emotional problems addicts have and why many of them use and abuse drugs or any type of addictive behavior as

²³ Altered states.net/barry/newsletter411/, Emergency Acupoints Renzhong GV 26 a bibliography review

²⁴ TCM BASICS on the 7 Emotional factors retrieved from url www.tcmbasics.com/etiology_7emotion.htm

a coping mechanism. Addiction is not only about physical pain but also emotional, and it is about escaping negative and imbalanced feelings. Addicts “use drugs” to soothe their minds and personal painful feelings - when imbalanced and weak they resort to their addiction to help them deal with emotions. Extreme feelings and imbalances of Qi and blood from the painful traumas in their lives push many to resort to things like opioid drugs, to self-medicate and provoke a different physical, psychological and physiological feelings which helps them get quick, temporary relief.^[25]

Addiction and the nervous system

We know the nervous system is involved in addiction, in TCM the nervous system is considered to be a complex electrical circuit system involving points and meridians that needs to be balanced to function effectively. In TCM theory the body’s yin & yang need to be rebalanced so this intricate circuit function can be reorganized. TCM medicine and Acupuncture can help rebalance the electrical systems within, and continue to help the body maintain this balanced state to prevent future pain and addiction relapse; TCM also helps to maintain the internal balances of yin and yang. This type of balance helps patients overcome the disordered mind and body connection and gives them truer feelings of well-being. For a pain sufferer who is now a drug addict this is vitally important. TCM has major theories dedicated to pain, the nervous system and certain aspects of the body including the body’s endorphins and pain physiology - which often need to be rebalanced when chronic pain sufferers and addicts.

For example...

-) The TCM endorphin theory – directly impacts the pain in the body
-) The TCM neurotransmitter theory – deals with inflammation and feelings of well being
-) The TCM gate control theory – deals with increasing the pain tolerance within a patient
-) The TCM homeostatic regulatory effect deals with regulating the patient’s body towards homeostasis to rebalance them from disease or other abnormal conditions
-) The TCM bioelectric theory – deals with stimulation of cells of tissue growth and repair to replenish lost cells and tissue damage
-) The TCM nervous system theory – deals with the central nervous system, the spinal and peripheral nerve stimulation and has the double implication for other systems already mentioned

The brain and pain killers

Pain killing opioids cause physical and psychological changes in brain function, and effect pain tolerance making the problem worse. When opioids enter the body and pass the brain barrier they convert to morphine and bind to internal opioid receptors and decrease the body’s perception of pain and elevate the mood with a huge flood of dopamine. Opioids connect directly to the brain’s motivation reward center, where the “feel good

chemicals” are released, so pleasure is experienced. This is how pain killing drugs work, but with long term use, abuse and addiction the brain is damaged as well as the heart, lungs and nervous system.^[26] The wonderful “feel good” connection to pain killer addiction actually makes recovery very difficult because by removing the substance abruptly this approach is telling the patient “not to feel good” and they instead feel quite depressed and end up feeling more physical pain and discomfort instead of recovering from their addiction. Acupuncture directly alters brain chemistry in a good way, without causing damage, it impacts the same neurotransmitters that can produce the same “feel good” sensation that the opioids do but with a balanced and healthy foundation and in a natural chemical-free administration. Acupuncture can play an essential role in pain management and western scientific research has shown that acupuncture releases endorphins and activates natural pain killers inside the body.^[27] Studies show that both acupuncture and electronic acupuncture can stop pain and blocks stress hormones so that patients feel more blissful and peaceful.^[28]



Figure 24. Acupuncture needles

Acupuncture treatments on the body of a person in pain or dealing with drug addiction can also help them gain power over the addiction and ease the process of going through withdrawals to get clean. Not only is it safe and scientifically proven to work on pain management, but it is also a non-addictive mood enhancing treatment and it is very cost-effective. Acupuncture and electro acupuncture can both be used in an integrative combination with other western style approaches for treating pain. Acupuncture can also treat addiction in combination with body massage and for the mental health of the patient Acupuncture can be used in combination with psychological counseling, group therapy, individual therapy, and support group therapy. Acupuncture can truly benefit pain and drug addiction because it is individualized, non-chemical and it can truly impact the mood and emotions to transform their uncomfortable feelings into feel good bliss, even while going through withdrawals which are especially harsh for opioids users. This is because Acupuncture impacts the body, the organs as well as the meridians and the mind. Scientifically, acupuncture is said to bring pain relief by inactivating the source of pain and modulating the endorphin levels in the body. It can also bring on better sleep, more energy, mental clarity, better digestion and less stress which is a beneficial package for a pain sufferer.^[29]

²⁵ Natasha Tracy; Causes of Drug Addiction- What Causes Drug Addiction? Retrieved from url healthypace.com/addictions/drug-addiction/causes-of-drug-addiction-what-causes-drug-addiction

²⁶ Elemental behavioral health Retrieved from url www.elementbehavioralhealth.com/addiction/addiction-lights-brain-dopamine-neurotransmitters-101/

²⁷ [Researchgate.net/publication/8569823_acupuncture_and_endorphins](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/8569823_acupuncture_and_endorphins)

²⁸ Acupuncture for stress and depression? Yes, Please! Retrieved from url www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/renaissance-woman/201509/acupuncture-stress-and-depression-yes-please

²⁹ The Role of acupuncture in Treating Chronic Pain; Retrieved from url

Acupuncture treatments for pain

-) Help to inactivate pain, remove the cause of the pain and prevent recurrence
-) Help to lessen stress, irritation and bring on blissful feelings

Acupuncture for opioid withdrawals

-) Help to reduce cravings for the drug directly
-) Help to keep the patient in rehab longer and prevent relapse
-) Help to relieve the unpleasant withdrawal symptoms
-) Help to balance the mood and emotions of the patient
-) Help to decrease the amounts of stress and anxiety that the patient experiences
-) Help to regulate sleep in the addict which is often disrupted by addiction cravings

Auricular therapy for treating drug addiction and withdrawal

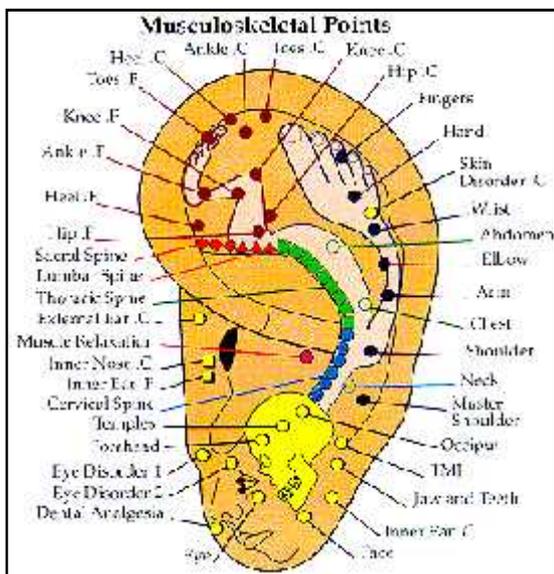


Figure 25. Auricular therapy

Like Acupuncture, Auricular therapies are also very beneficial for pain and addiction and are often an important part of pain treatment. Auricular acupuncture is a very ancient technique that uses certain points on the ear and very tiny needles to make shallow insertion and ease symptoms.^[30] With auricular therapy there are several specific points on the ear that can be used to control pain, addiction and the impulsive feelings addicts feel. Auricular therapy directly impacts pain in injured organs and body areas.

For all types of pain and drug addictions auricular points can be used such as

-) FOR GENERAL PAIN – The Tranquilizer point, Stress control point, Master cerebral point Master sensorial

point, Oscillation point, Point zero, Endocrine point, Thalamus point and the Sympathetic point can be used

-) Lung point – this point improves lung functions and alleviates emotional feelings of grief associated with addiction and addicts may have repressed grief involved in their desire to use drugs
-) Liver point – this point removes toxins from the liver and blood and curbs the emotion of aggression, because toxins accumulate in a drug addict they need to be released from the body. Aggression also helps to fuel a strong drug habit impacts the emotional health of a drug addict so using this point can help them feel less aggressive and more relaxed.
-) Kidney Point- the kidney point repairs the vital organs of the body and eases fear that an addict may experience from the fear of life, life responsibilities as well as the fear of not having the drug that they use as a crutch to help them deal with everyday life issues
-) Shen men – this shen or spirit point helps to decrease anxiety and it is also known as the “spirit gate” point – which is a very important point for drug addicts who often are looking for a spiritual connection or state of euphoria to relieve their anxiety by using a drug, this point can bring on this spiritual feeling and relieve anxiety naturally.
-) The Autonomic or Sympathetic point – this point promotes relaxation and soothing within the nervous system - the nervous system is a focal point for drug addicts because the brain is impacted most by the addictive habit. With this point addicts can regain a calm and relaxed feeling - naturally without drugs.³¹

Conclusion

In conclusion, it needs to be said that the opioid crisis is unbelievably bad for the USA but this opportunity for TCM to help with an effective pain treatment is an extremely important opportunity. For TCM acupuncture to get the chance to fill this important role is paramount. With proper acupuncture and electro acupuncture pain treatments plus auricular therapy patients will get a more effective healing experience than they are now. The establishment of TCM in US hospitals and clinical settings will help patients have easier access to Acupuncture treatments and give them more faith in the power of TCM overall. With the government supporting TCM Acupuncturists they will be able stand confidently as they assist western medicine doctors while properly treating people with chronic pain. Preventing the pain medication abuse and addiction that is occurring by using TCM’s natural systems for treating pain are chemical-free, individualized and cost-effective, and this is far better approach and an improvement on the way we are treating patients now.

www.practicalpainmanagement.com/patient/treatments/alternative/role-acupuncture-treating-chronic-pain
³⁰ Using Acupuncture in Rehab Programs recovery.org Retrieved from url www.recovery.org/topics/acupuncture-for-addiction/

³¹ Auricular therapy, Retrieved from url Recovery.org



Figure 26. NCCAOM

As a bonus, Acupuncture will finally get real support to share its truly powerful and valuable abilities. This is a great moment in the internationalization of TCM and it is important for all available acupuncturists that are trained and qualified to get prepared and board certified with NCCAOM so they can help out during this crisis.^[32] NCCAOM needs qualified, compassionate Acupuncturists that can help the US win their war against Pain and the opioid crisis. TCM medical experts *can* rescue the US population from this, by treating their chronic pain, reducing their dependency on opioid medications, lessening their withdrawals using TCM Acupuncture and Auricular Therapies and helping them recover from this crisis– so let's get going! TCM to the Rescue!

Would you like to help with this opioid crisis?
Then contact NCCAOM for board certification
For more information contact nccaom.org

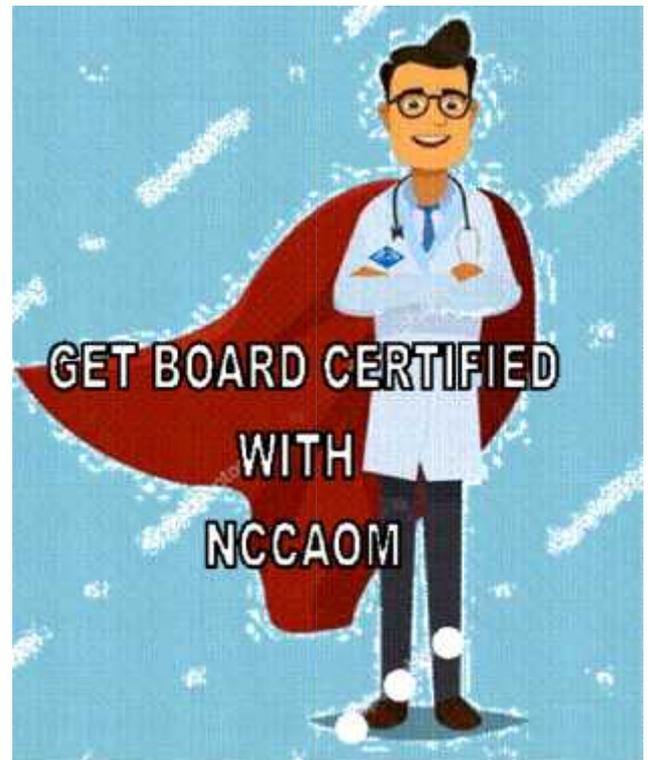


Figure 27. NCCAOM needs your help!

³² Get board certified as an acupuncturist now! NCCAOM.org