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Acupuncture moves into sports medicine

Special to The Citizen

The world of sports medicine is an increasingly specialized area of study for the application of the Chinese medical practice of acupuncture.

"Athletes of all ages, from high school basketball players to retired pro football players have experienced the healing benefits of acupuncture," said Ashley Hoyt, an acupuncture practitioner in Key West. "Not only does it improve performance but it also accelerates healing which allow the athletes to continue to perform with less recovery time."

This new world of sports medicine acupuncture is addressing the needs of the higher demands on an athlete's body. The therapeutic approach of acupuncture for those who participate in sports that have a concentrated career window is needed because the above average demand on their bodies is so high, as is the risk of post-career chronic ailments.

Hoyt said it is rewarding to an acupuncturist to treat patients, often athletes, with ailments specific to the muscle and bone.

"As Chinese medicine gains acceptance in the U.S. health-care system, many practitioners have taken their careers to the next level, breaking into the world of professional sports medicine," Hoyt said. She added that many practitioners were once athletes themselves and, because they understand the patients' experiences and share their pain, they can heal others with a greater understanding of the pain.

High performance athletes often incur injuries that need treatment when they endure strenuous, repetitive movements and physical contact on a constant basis. Chronic injuries are common, such as low back, shoulder, knee and ankle sprain. Basketball injuries usually consist of tendonitis, lower leg injuries, ankles and knees from the constant pivoting and repetition.

Hoyt cites acupuncture studies that claim that 99 percent of players find it to be very effective.

Combined with aggressive massage therapy, acupuncture can be used to treat trauma such as bruising, swelling, and

muscle, tendon, and ligament injuries to give athlete's bodies the maximum opportunity to heal itself. Also, athletes respond very well to treatments because most of them are young and their bodies respond quickly.

Sports medicine acupuncture is a new way to approach the traditional treatment methods of ice, electro-stimulation, and surgery and the future holds much promise as more and more players continue to seek alternative ways to achieve high levels of performance, Hoyt said. She added that acupuncture is so effective in sports medicine because it moves the blood,

it is anti-inflammatory, and it increases endorphin release, which reduces pain, promotes healing and prevents degeneration without negative side effects.

The progressive nature of Oriental medicine is clearly paving the way for the future, showing the effective, long-lasting results that athletes need to continue doing what they love long after the final game. And sports medicine acupuncture will play a role in their journey.

For more information, contact the Clinic of Alternative Medicine in Key West at 305-296-5358. The office is located at 3420 Duck Ave.

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