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Acupuncture Aids Kids with Cerebral Palsy

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By Will Boggs, MD

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - A short course of tongue acupuncture can be effective in improving movement control and function in children with cerebral palsy, Chinese investigators report.

In fact, researcher Dr. Virginia Wong told Reuters Health, "Acupuncture can be integrated as part of the neuro-rehabilitation program, practiced by Western rehabilitation doctors," for children with cerebral palsy.

Wong, who is at the University of Hong Kong, and her colleagues note in the *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry* that previous research demonstrated the value of a brief course of tongue acupuncture in improving drooling in cerebral palsy patients.

To investigate further, the team assessed whether daily tongue acupuncture, compared with sham acupuncture, given over 8 weeks could improve motor function in 33 children with cerebral palsy.

Most children tolerated the tongue acupuncture procedure after initially crying in the first few sessions.

Movement scores improved from 78.82 to 82.99 after the tongue acupuncture, the team reports, compared with smaller improvements from 65.35 to 67.29 after a similar course of sham acupuncture.

In addition, scores in self-care, mobility, and self-care assistance improved significantly after tongue acupuncture, but did not change after sham acupuncture.

In light of these findings, Wong concluded, more research is needed, "to assess whether starting acupuncture in the earlier phase of brain injury will affect the final functional outcome."

SOURCE: *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry*, July 2004.

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