

acupuncture and its benefits for paralysed animals



DR LIANG XUTIAN
BVSc (Hons) Sydney,
Certified Veterinary
Acupuncturist, Chi
Institute Spain

The Animal Clinic

ACUPUNCTURE IS ONE of the treatment tools used by traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) doctors and has been applied to animals in China for 3,000 years. It has been used widely in the USA since the 1980s and is gaining popularity around the world more recently.

In TCM, the body is viewed as an integrated energetic structure and it is qi that gives our body life. Sickness occurs when there is imbalance in our body and perfect health can be achieved when the body's balance is restored. In TCM, paralysis is attributed to a lack of qi and stagnation of blood. The blood stagnation results in pain and the qi deficiency results in weakness or paralysis as the nerves are not being nourished.

When a paralysed pet is brought to the clinic, the animal is first examined from head to toe. Blood tests, radiographs and advanced imaging such as an MRI or CT scan may also be carried out. The results obtained from these investigations can confirm the cause of the paralysis and help to guide the treatment provided. In some cases, owners may not pursue advanced imaging as our animal patients require a full general anesthesia for this and that is often perceived as risky and



Micia receiving acupuncture for chronic rhinitis. Picture printed with permission from Stefano and Waheza Poli.

expensive. As such, the final diagnosis on the cause of the paralysis may not be known. In these cases, the treatment chosen is often times supportive, aimed to make the animal more comfortable and to minimise secondary complications such as pressure sores, urine and fecal retention or incontinence and malnutrition.

This is when I would inform owners of the availability of TCM to harness the benefits of both Chinese and Western medicine as acupuncture can be used to lessen pain and reduce the time for rehabilitation and recovery.

During a TCM consultation, I will find out more about the pet's personality, habits, likes and dislikes. Next, a thorough examination of the

pet will be performed including an examination of the tongue and pulse, two essential tenets of traditional Chinese medicine. Once a diagnosis is reached, the acupuncture session will commence and sterile needles will be inserted into acupuncture points. This is sometimes enhanced with low frequency and amplitude electric stimulation (electroacupuncture) as well as Vitamin B12 being injected into the acupuncture points (aquapuncture).

The duration and frequency of the session will depend on your pet's condition but on average, treatment lasts 20 minutes. In most cases, the patients will return for weekly acupuncture visits initially for four weeks with the interval extended as the patient's condition improves. The veterinary acupuncturist may also recommend that your pet receive Chinese herbs or suggest a change in the diet to help enhance the acupuncture treatment.

In my experience, cases that respond most positively are those where the paralysis occurred suddenly rather than those that have been gradually deteriorating. Cases where the cause appears to be due to nerve degeneration tend not to improve as much. Acupuncture treatment is to slow down the progression of the disease.

CASE STUDY

Jerry is a 15-year-old cross bred dog who collapsed suddenly and was unable to move. The owners, Mr and Mrs Somo Vendasan, knew that this was abnormal and brought Jerry to the clinic as soon as it opened the next day. After examination, I suspected that Jerry may

have had a stroke. In addition to offering Western treatment which included nerve supplements, I also offered the use of acupuncture to enhance his recovery. Mr and Mrs Somo accepted the acupuncture treatment with realistic expectations that Jerry may not have a full recovery and that it could take some time given his age. A few days after the first treatment, Jerry showed signs of recovery in that he was calmer and not falling over. Jerry came for treatments twice a week and after the fourth treatment he was able to stand up and walk, although still requiring some assistance for the first few steps. In the second month, Jerry received fortnightly treatments and now walks with no difficulties. Currently, he receives monthly acupuncture to help with his long term arthritis. The dedication of the owners and Jerry's easy-going personality and acceptance of acupuncture contributed to his speedy recovery.

Overall, the success of acupuncture as a treatment for paralysis or other disorders in any animal relies on several factors. The first is an accurate TCM diagnosis and the skillful insertion of needles into the correct acupuncture points. Hence, pet owners who are interested in acupuncture treatment for their pet need to seek the services of a certified veterinary acupuncturist. Also important is the owner's commitment to the entire cycle of treatment and this could mean bringing their pet in for a number of follow-up acupuncture sessions. Finally, the overall health of the animal, the capacity of the body to heal and the disposition of your pet will also contribute to the success of the treatment.



Veterinary Diets



mobility



hepatic



recovery



renal