Dental occlusion/temporomandibular joint and general body health

Drs Yong-Keun Lee & Hyung-Joo Moon discuss clinical evidence and mechanism of an underestimated relationship

Correlation between trigger points and acupuncture points

Although separated by two millennia, the traditions of acupuncture and myofascial pain therapies share fundamental similarities in the treatment of pain disorders. Recent reports have suggested substantial anatomic, clinical and physiological overlap of the myofascial trigger points and acupuncture points. This analogy between the trigger points and acupuncture points has been discussed since 1977, when 300 per cent anatomic and 71 per cent clinical pain correspondences for the myofascial trigger points and acupuncture points in the treatment of pain disorders were reported.

A number of similarities between them were also suggested. The two structures have similar locations and needles are used at either point to treat pain. The pain associated with the local twitch response at trigger points is similar to the de qi sensation, and the referred pain generated by needling trigger points is similar to the propagated sensation along the meridians.

It was pointed out, however, that the acupuncture points located at the trigger points are not frequently used by acupuncturists, and do not share the same clinical indications as the trigger point therapy. It was further argued that the claim of 71 per cent correspondence between the acupuncture points and the trigger points is conceptually impossible. Furthermore, even putting this conceptual problem aside, no more than 40 per cent of the acupuncture points are effective in the treatment for pain and, more likely, only approximately 18 to 19 per cent of the points are actually correlated. The correlation between the trigger points and the acupuncture points clearly need to be further investigated in the future.

The fascial connection theory we propose can explain the functional connection between dental occlusion/TMJ and other parts of the body based on either myofascial release or the qi meridian system. This overlap can further be investigated in the future.

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