

Acupuncture for Computer-related Ailments

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Today the number of computers in the workplace and at home is increasing at a tremendous rate every year. With the proliferation of computer use in our society, an increasing number of people are afflicted with various kinds of computer-related ailments. These repetitive strain injuries (RSI) such as carpal tunnel syndrome and other musculo-skeletal disorders of the hand and arm have become a serious social health issue of the day. Statistics show that in the US, repetitive strain injuries (RSI) alone have increased by 770% in ten years and the compensation paid out annually for all these injuries (RSI) has reached \$2 billion. In fact this trend is well reflected in the increase in patients who seek acupuncture and moxibustion treatment for health problems caused by extensive use of computers on a daily basis.

Common injuries (RSI) are tendonitis of the fingers, injury to the median nerve in the wrist called carpal tunnel syndrome which can cause severe wrist pain, numbness or tingling of the fingers, and severe stiffness or pain in the neck and shoulders. As a preventative measure against RSI, attention seems to be focused on the correct posture to maintain at the computer as well as the precise positioning of the arms and wrists in relation to the keyboard. However, these ailments are not the only symptoms that many computer workers are afflicted with. Other health problems such as eyestrain, blood shot eyes, visual disorders (e.g. double vision, blurred vision and seeing colored fringes or spots) and headaches due to prolonged overexposure to the computer screen are also very common complaints.

There is no doubt that keeping a proper posture and adjusting the position of the body in relation to the computer is crucial for the prevention of RSI. However, once RSI develops, it is very difficult to treat them successfully with modern medical treatments such as pain killers, anti-inflammatory pills, cortisone shots into the afflicted areas or the application of a strap or splint. Many patients end up suffering from these injuries for an unnecessarily long period with little relief. In addition to this, other symptoms such as stiff neck and shoulders, eye or visual problems and headaches are regarded as minor disorders and do not receive serious attention or treatment as the primary ailment.

Fortunately, acupuncture and moxibustion treatments are very effective in treating these problems in the sense of promot-

ing total healing, not just temporary symptomatic relief. In treating a patient afflicted with a computer-related illness, the point is to focus not only on the affected local parts but to take into account the condition of the whole body. In my treatment, I use the following tsubo or acupuncture points as a set for every patient with computer-related problems:

(1) Chief complaint: carpal tunnel syndrome and neck/shoulder/arm pain

GB21, TH15, SI10, SI11, LI16, LI15, LI11, LI10, LI5, LI4, TW9, TW5, TW4, PC4, PC7.

(2) Chief complaint: Headache and visual problems

GV20, BL10, GB20, GB3, TW20, BL43, BL17, BL18. In addition to these points, BL23, 24, 25, ST36, and SP6 are used fairly frequently. (40mm #2 Japanese needles and half-grain size direct moxa are used.)

Although the patient's chief complaints may be RSI, usually headache and visual problems also exist. It is necessary, therefore, to use each of these points for maximum effect and to avoid over-treatment. (Usually I complete each session in about thirty minutes.) Tendonitis of the forearm and carpal tunnel syndrome are most commonly manifested along the median nerve and radial nerve, so it is very effective to retain Akabane intradermal needles in LI-5, LI-10, PC-4, and TW-4. In addition to acupuncture and moxibustion treatment, I also give instruction on posture, proper positioning of arms and wrists for comfortable typing, and show stretching and shiatsu techniques to do once every hour while working at the computer.

Thanks to the incredible advancement in computer technology, the world is becoming a real information society in which computers will be indispensable in our daily lives. This means that a great deal of time will be spent typing at the keyboard and glued to the computer screen every day, and so it is likely that more and more people will become victims of computer-related ailments. It is my belief that acupuncture and moxibustion treatments will come to be recognized and accepted by the public as one of the best solutions in treating these health problems, if we can better inform and educate them.