



FINGERPRINT

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Acupuncture: A Complementary Tool for RMTs

by Sam Mendonca '17

As the latest round of graduates left the halls of Sutherland-Chan, I couldn't help but reflect on my own graduation a year ago. After breathing that massive sigh of relief, oddly enough, I found myself contemplating what continuing education course to take next. Something that has been on my mind for a while is acupuncture. More specifically, the Contemporary Medical Acupuncture course at McMaster University. To find out more about the modality and the program, I decided to speak to a few RMTs who have taken the course and use acupuncture in their practices.

I reached out to Erin McNeely '14, Katy Nguyen '17, Madhvi Aggarwal '17 and Sorin Darie '16, all S-C grads who have taken the McMaster program. I was curious about a few things, starting with what drew them to acupuncture. For Erin, it was always something she had planned on doing; she had



Erin McNeely applying acupuncture needles to a patient during a session.

received treatment as an athlete and it was quite effective for her. Madhvi had already completed a Chinese Medicine program in B.C. and wanted to explore the Western approach that the McMaster course teaches. Interestingly enough, everyone spoke of this program as the "go-to" acupuncture course. Sorin and Katy both felt that McMaster's focus on evidence-based medicine, along with amazing resources like the cadaver lab, made this school an obvious choice for them.

I was curious about how an RMT incorporates acupuncture into a session. Would they needle one area while massaging another? Would the treatment be split into an acupuncture portion and a massage portion? Erin typically does use

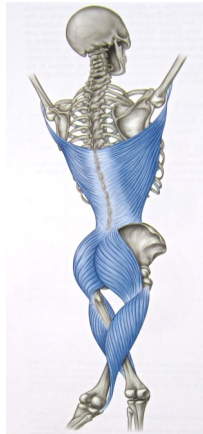
acupuncture on one area while manually treating another, but says it really depends on the patient's presentation and comfort with needles – some people find it difficult to tolerate other stimuli while they have needles in. The therapists I spoke to all said they use acupuncture with at least half of their patients, if not more.

I have received acupuncture treatments, but was never consistent enough in my sessions to see notable change. I wanted to know, from the therapist's perspective, how effective acupuncture treatments can be. Sorin recalled a patient who had come in a few hours after torquing her knee. She was unable to weight-bear, relying on a friend to help her walk into the clinic. Sorin applied acupuncture around the thigh and knee. To everyone's surprise, she was able to stand up and walk

without assistance. Sorin explained that the inflammatory and pain-producing chemicals around the joint had cleared up, and the effect lasted for a week until the soft tissues of the knee had healed.

I asked the therapists for any words of advice for someone like me who is interested in the course. Madhvi screamed, "Do the program!" She believes that learning an approach that will broaden one's mind and offer a different perspective on how to treat the body is tremendously valuable to bodyworkers. Sorin said that taking the course alongside physiotherapists and chiropractors is extremely useful in learning how to communicate with other healthcare practitioners about cases. All four RMTs urged me to take the program, emphasizing how beneficial it would be for me and for my patients.

For more information about the McMaster University Contemporary Medical Acupuncture course, check here: <https://mcmasteracupuncture.com/>



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