FDI POLICY STATEMENT

Use of Acupuncture in Dentistry

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DEFINITION AND BACKGROUND

Acupuncture is one of the 'Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)' techniques used to treat a variety of diseases and disorders. Up to one third of the public in many countries has been shown to consult a CAM practitioner at least once a year.

Acupuncture originated in China more than 4000 years ago. It is defined as the stimulation of the so-called ‘acupoints’ for disease prevention, treatment or maintenance of health. Acupuncture can utilize various methods including solid needles, lasers, electro-acupuncture and transcutaneous nerve stimulation.

In dentistry, acupuncture has been used in treatment of a range of diseases/disorders and facilitation of dental treatments, particularly for analgesia associated with dental procedures and for the management of temporomandibular joint disorders, chronic oral-facial and myofascial pain syndromes, prominent gag reflex, and dental anxiety. Patient responses to acupuncture are generally positive while they could vary greatly, as some difficulties arise in the interpretation of efficacy studies, because of variations in study design, sample sizes, the choice of placebo, and sham acupuncture points.

Acupuncture is a CAM approach with accredited training and regulation in a number of countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Dentists should only treat their patients with acupuncture after obtaining the relevant knowledge and ability.
- Acupuncture should only be employed after a thorough diagnosis of the patient’s condition. Meanwhile, employment of conventional therapies may be considered as appropriate.
- A separate informed consent for acupuncture may be required.
- Standard infection control procedures must be in place. Single use of needles must be employed.
- As it is the case with all therapeutic measures, the use of acupuncture has to be documented appropriately and detailed records must be kept.

- Multidisciplinary research into the effective use of acupuncture in dentistry is encouraged.
- Teaching and professional training in acupuncture could be considered as an optional part of undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing professional development.

KEYWORDS

Alternative medicine

REFERENCES

1. Rosted P. The use of acupuncture in dentistry: a review of the scientific validity of published papers. *Oral Dis* 1998 4:100-104.
2. Thayer MLT. The use of acupuncture in dentistry. *Dent Update* 2007 34:244- 250.