

Originally published in *Health & Healing in the Triangle*, Vol. 11, No. 3, Health & Healing, Inc., Chapel Hill, NC, publishers. Reprinted with permission.



## PM&R DEPARTMENT OFFERS ACUPUNCTURE AND RESEARCH

**D**r. Jongbae Park deservedly speaks with authority about acupuncture. While still a young man, he has gained international recognition for his research work on the efficacy of acupuncture for treating various illnesses and disorders. He came to UNC last year as an assistant professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and provides clinical treatment in the Department's acupuncture clinic, along with Dr. Paul Thananopavarn.

Dr. Park earned an MA and a PhD in Korean medicine, and a medical degree from Kyung Hee University in his native Seoul, Korea, and a PhD in clinical medical sciences from the University of Exeter, UK.

Before joining UNC in 2007, in England he was a research professor at the Institute of East & West Medicine, under the auspices of the World Health Organization, moved on to become an instructor in medicine at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Harvard Medical School, and was a visiting faculty member at the University of Ulster, in Northern Ireland, UK, a year later.

While Dr. Park is a gifted acupuncture clinician, his passion is research of the efficacy of acupuncture in the treatment of a variety of health disorders.

Dr. Park in the PM&R Acupuncture Clinic counsels a patient with carpal tunnel syndrome.

### *Health&Healing: Where is your research centered at the present time?*

**DR. PARK:** Right now, I'm engaged in researching the effects of acupuncture and some other modalities joining together in the treatment of lower back pain. It is a two-year study, funded by a foundation based in Korea.

Another key part of my research is developing and refining control methods for conducting acupuncture research. I have developed a sham control method that has been validated and is now used by many acupuncture researchers worldwide in testing the effective use of acupuncture. I am now refining how we can interpret the outcomes from those sham control trials in comparison with other trials using placebo controls.

Quite understandably, people tend to think of acupuncture only as an effective tool for pain management, and it is most commonly used in the west for that purpose. However, it is also true that acupuncture has been used under much wider conditions than simply pain management in Asian countries including China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and other countries.

The research has been done in the west for the last 10 to 20 years. We have large, extensive studies that establish the clinical effectiveness of acupuncture for the treatment of neck, knee, and back pain, headache to some degree, and nausea. Huge trials have shown that acupuncture is effective in comparison with usual care or no treatment all for these conditions.

One of the huge benefits of acupuncture is the minimal risk of side effects that are common with pharmacological agents. Acupuncture is just acupuncture, and when you take the needle out, your body works in its own way. Acupuncture doesn't create a cascade of adverse effects.

Secondarily, I would certainly diagnose and consult with patients who have hot flashes and other conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome or insomnia—or other conditions recommended by the NIH or WHO—where in many instances acupuncture may prove to be an effective treatment.

**For more information, call the UNC Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Acupuncture Clinic: 919.966.8812**