

## Use Of Acupuncture By The U.S. Military To Treat Battlefield Injuries, PTSD

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<http://www.asianscientist.com/health-medicine/medical-acupuncture-used-by-united-states-armed-forces-for-brain-injuries-ptsd-2012/>

*AsianScientist* (Jan. 10, 2012) - The latest issue of the journal *Medical Acupuncture* reveals that the United States Armed Forces is incorporating acupuncture, one of the oldest healing practices in the world, to assist in the medical care of its personnel.

First recorded in the Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon (????), an ancient Chinese medical text written more than two millennia ago, acupuncture is a traditional Chinese method of encouraging the body to promote natural healing and to improve functioning by inserting needles and applying heat or electrical stimulation at very precise acupuncture points.

Before the 1990s, the U.S. military hardly used acupuncture in its treatment of military personnel. In 2001, however, Dr. Richard C. Niemtow, Editor-in-Chief of *Medical Acupuncture* and Director of the USAF Acupuncture Center in Maryland, developed an acupuncture technique designed for military use.

Battlefield acupuncture (BFA), as it is called, is a modified auricular acupuncture technique that introduced physicians to a military-centric style of acupuncture that was quick, simple, and efficient.

“The use of acupuncture for helping wounded warriors suffering from pain, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and mild traumatic brain injury is growing rapidly,” said Dr. Niemtow.

Acupuncture has been used to treat wounded soldiers in Afghanistan, with Dr. Robert Koffman, a medical doctor and captain with the U.S. Navy, providing [five examples of its use on the battlefield](#).

"Just yesterday, I took care of [several] soldiers involved in a complex IED [improvised explosive device] attack that killed [many] of their fellow soldiers. Almost all of the surviving soldiers had blown TMs [tympanic membranes], pounding headaches from mTBI, and assorted musculoskeletal injuries....I proceeded to do BFA [Battlefield Acupuncture]... The response was amazing: 0–1 headache pain down from 7 or 8; no more shoulder pain or back pain; more importantly, a more subdued demeanor which they hadn't experienced since being attacked three days earlier," Dr. Koffman wrote in an email from Afghanistan.

The issue also highlights ongoing research being carried out on acupuncture to treat military personnel. One study is looking at the effect of acupuncture on war-related Trauma Spectrum Response (wrTSR). As of July 2011, 15 personnel have consented and enrolled in the study. In another study, researchers are trying to improve current BFA techniques to relieve pain more rapidly.

When discussing the future of acupuncture in the U.S. military, Dr. Niemtow expressed cautious optimism on the subject.

"The future of acupuncture and the eventual incorporation of other complementary and alternative medicine into an integrative military medical system will require strategic research and will have to overcome many hurdles," he mused.

The series of articles can be found at: [Dec 2011 issue of the Medical Acupuncture journal](#).

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