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ACUPUNCTURE HELPS BRING BALANCE AND TOP PERFORMANCE TO ATHLETES

With the Olympic Games for 2008 headed for China this year, it will be interesting to see if Acupuncture receives mention in terms of athletic training, injury prevention and healing. More and more international athletes, coaches and trainers are learning that Acupuncture can play an important role in athletic performance.

Ronda Wimmer, a PhD and an acupuncturist, has had occasion to work with the USA Volleyball team. In this sport which requires quick starts and stops, instant acceleration and lots of squatting and jumping, she has learned a great deal about the importance of balanced muscle strength. She has also paid a good deal of attention to “muscle compensation.” Compensation occurs when one muscle group or joint area of the body has to work extra hard to make up for a weakening or dysfunction of another area. Recognizing this compensation pattern and then applying the principles of Acupuncture to the over-used area can help to correct problems before they worsen.

Volleyball is just one sport that requires the use of a dominant throwing or hitting arm working in conjunction with a dominant leg action to produce a result. Tennis, softball, baseball and basketball are all common American games that require this action. In each of these sports, the right-handed athlete is typically left-side dominant in the leg and will have the tendency to use this side of the body as the catapult for jumping and lunging actions. Regardless of whether the person is a weekend warrior or a professional athlete, overuse of an area can result in compensation patterns developing from the other side of the body.

The hip joint is the most common area for such compensations to occur. In most cases, according to Ms. Wimmer, the athlete is unaware of the fact that over-use of one side is causing compensation to occur in the opposite side until pain starts to develop – usually in the lower back. A person trained to recognize this pattern will see it much sooner by observing an athlete’s gait and checking for a pelvic tilt to the side that is compensating.

Acupuncture can go a long way to help an athlete by counterbalancing deficiencies in one area of the body. Traditional Acupuncture as well as electro-Acupuncture stimulations can both be very effective. Much has to do with the diagnosis of the actual muscle or area of a joint where the deficiency is occurring and then treating with Acupuncture according to an athlete’s particular need.

Members of the USA Volleyball team who have traveled to Japan are very familiar with Acupuncture as it is frequently used there to keep competitors functioning in the best balance. Some US training teams are now including the services of an acupuncturist and it will be interesting to see if this becomes a more frequent occurrence after the Beijing Olympics. It would be good to see more world-class athletes and recreational sport enthusiasts playing to their absolute best with the help of Acupuncture.