

SF Board Adopts Resolutions for Acupuncture in Hospitals, Addiction Programs

By Editorial Staff

Numerous studies have documented the cost-effectiveness of acupuncture compared to traditional Western medical care. A 1994 study of stroke patients showed that those who received acupuncture spent an average of 73 days less in a hospital or nursing home than those receiving standard care alone, saving an average of more than \$26,000 in medical costs per patient.¹

Acupuncture has also been shown to be effective in treating certain addictions.

Over the past two decades, acupuncture has proven much more successful than traditional forms of intervention in helping patients lose their addictions to alcohol, tobacco and heroin, among other substances.²⁻⁵

Armed with that knowledge, San Francisco's Board of Supervisors has introduced a pair of resolutions to expand the use of acupuncture in health facilities and law enforcement programs across San Francisco. If passed, the resolutions would compel the city's non-profit hospitals to grant privileges to acupuncturists in order to treat certain patients and recommend that the San Francisco Sheriff's Department to expand its pilot program using acupuncture to treat drug addiction.

Resolutions 934-99 and 935-99 were introduced concurrently on October 4th by Supervisor Mabel Teng, a long-time advocate of acupuncture, with support coming from fellow supervisors Tom Ammiano, Alicia Becerril, Sue Bierman and Leslie Katz.

Resolution 934-99

Resolution 934-99 urges San Francisco General Hospital and all non-profit hospitals in San Francisco to grant hospital privileges to acupuncturists with hospitalized patients. The resolution reads in part:

"Whereas, State Senator John Burton and Assemblywoman Carole Migden sponsored legislation in 1997 including acupuncture as an authorized health care treatment under the California Workers Compensation System; and

"Whereas, a 1998 University of Stanford study shows that seventy percent of Americans now turn to acupuncture and other alternative forms of medicine; and

"Whereas, the World Health Organization has found acupuncture effective for the treatment of over forty-three conditions including allergies, asthma, back pain, colds and flu, depression, infertility, insomnia, and stress; and

"Whereas, a 1996 study by the Department of Public Health shows that nearly one third of all long-term HIV/AIDS survivors used traditional Chinese medicine; and

"Whereas, acupuncture is commonly used to improve immune systems and the side effects of medications; and

"Whereas, General Hospital and most non-profit hospitals do not allow non-physician acupuncturists to treat their patients who are hospitalized there; and

"Whereas, San Francisco acupuncture clinics have long waiting lists for people with HIV/AIDs seeking treatment; now, therefore, be it

"Resolved, that the Board of Supervisors for the city and county of San Francisco does hereby urge General Hospital and all non-profit hospitals in San Francisco does hereby urge General Hospital and all non-profit hospitals in San Francisco to grant hospital privileges to acupuncturists with hospitalized patients."

Resolution 935-99

Resolution 935-99 encourages the city's Sheriff's Department to expand its pilot acupuncture program to treat drug addiction. The program was begun in 1994 after preliminary studies showed inmates who received acupuncture while in jail were less likely to be reincarcerated than those who were not treated.

In addition to acupuncture, inmates are treated with yoga, meditation, herbal teas, aromatherapy and group counseling. Results of the department's current program have proved encouraging: 15 percent of those

participating in the study have not returned to jail.

Resolution 935-99 reads as follows:

"Whereas, State Senator John Burton and Assemblywoman Carole Migden sponsored legislation in 1997 including acupuncture as an authorized health care treatment under the California Workers Compensation System; and

"Whereas, a 1998 University of Stanford study shows that seventy percent of Americans now turn to acupuncture and other alternative forms of medicine; and

"Whereas, the World Health Organization has found acupuncture effective for the treatment of over forty-three conditions including allergies, asthma, back pain, colds and flu, depression, infertility, insomnia, and stress; and

"Whereas, Lincoln Hospital, a city funded hospital in Bronx, New York, is using acupuncture as an alternative to methadone for treating heroin addiction; and

"Whereas, retention and success rates for this program, which has been emulated in over 1000 clinics worldwide, are as high as 60 percent; and

"Whereas, acupuncture is now used in over twenty states and 800 drug dependency clinics; and

"Whereas, eighty-nine percent of nonviolent drug users in the Miami Drug Court treated with acupuncture remain unarrested for at least one year compared to ten percent using traditional methods; and

"Whereas, the San Francisco Sheriff's Department has implemented a pilot program in the San Francisco jails using acupuncture and herbs to treat drug addiction; now, therefore, be it

"Resolved, that the Board of Supervisors for the City and County of San Francisco does hereby urge the San Francisco Sheriff's Department to expand its pilot program using acupuncture to treat drug addiction."

Acupuncture Today is monitoring the status of resolutions 934-99 and 935-99 and will update the profession on the outcome of both resolutions in an upcoming issue.

References

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