

## *Charleston Community Acupuncture*

### **Welcome to Charleston's 1st Community Acupuncture Clinic!**

*Please take a few minutes to slowly read this introduction to our clinic and community.*

Charleston Community Acupuncture (CCA) is one of the first community acupuncture clinics established in the south east, and is affiliated with the Community Acupuncture Network (CAN) a non-profit organization whose mission is to make acupuncture affordable for nearly everyone, while promoting a sustainable business model that works for patients and practitioners. This is done by offering one of the world's oldest and most effective medical treatments – acupuncture - in a comfortable group setting. By doing this we can engender a warm community atmosphere and lower cost per treatment, thereby making treatments available to people of all means, and ultimately providing an opportunity for more frequent use of acupuncture, with better outcomes. We see this clinic and others like it functioning as a safe place to come take a rest while working through pain and suffering toward healthier patterns.

If you'd like more information about community acupuncture, or are looking for a clinic like ours in other parts of the country or overseas, visit [www.communityacupuncturenetwork.org](http://www.communityacupuncturenetwork.org) or ask us and we'd be happy to help you. As of mid-2009, there are over 80 such full-time clinics operating in the U.S. & Canada. It makes us really happy to be able to find community-minded, affordable acupuncture clinics for our neighbors and patients. Let us know if you find any we don't know about!

The many acupuncturists use a style of acupuncture where needles are inserted directly into the area of pain. The problem with this approach is that it can feel pretty uncomfortable, and one runs the risk of aggravating existing pain. We use a different style of acupuncture. These methods are time-tested and even safer. The effects can also be surprisingly fast. The acupuncture points we choose most often are on the scalp and ears, from the elbows to the hand, and from the knees to the feet. Consequently, you'll just have to roll your sleeves and pant legs up, in order to get ready for your treatment. These treatments are efficient, comfortable and extremely effective. Pain relief can occur in seconds with long lasting relief of chronic pain resulting over a series of treatments. However, there are times when needling locally may be appropriate in order to attain maximum results from the acupuncture treatment. The needles we use are made from stainless steel and are sterile, one time use, and disposable. They are opened from a blister pack immediately before treatment.

We also offer **Herbal medicine** at a reduced price when necessary or requested by our patients. Our herbs are given in two forms. We custom blend single herbs into a herbal tea that can be added to warm water as a beverage. We also offer pills that are easy to swallow, without having to taste what's in them. Herbal consultations are a private one on one intake that takes time in order to get the correct herbal diagnosis.

**Tuina** and **Shiatsu** are offered as well. Massage can be done fifteen to thirty minutes **before** acupuncture and is highly recommended since relaxation tends to increase the effectiveness of acupuncture.

## *The Beauty of the Sliding Scale*

Acupuncture is undeniably most effective for current health concerns when it is done **frequently and regularly**. We've found this to be especially true at the beginning of a course of treatment, when we are getting the ball rolling with respect to healthy changes. Twice a week is usually the minimum required to make progress with a health issue – though more frequent visits are common for short periods of time if the problem is quite intense.

**The purpose of the sliding scale is to separate the issues of money and treatment.**

When this is done, acupuncture can be available as often as needed, affording quicker and more lasting results. **Remember, what is most important to us is your ability to be here getting treated as often as you need. This moves positive changes forward, and gives you confidence in this process at the same time.**

**\$20-40 each visit**

**You decide what you can afford.  
No questions asked.**

**The bottom line is you should choose a rate you feel you can budget for at each visit.** We'll be happy with and will thank you for your payment no matter where it is on the sliding scale. We understand that for most of us, financial situations differ greatly even week to week. Our goal is to be able to provide acupuncture to you as often as is needed for improvement of your health issues.

Because we offer a sliding scale, we cannot accept insurance billing (that's the insurance companies' rule, not ours). If you have insurance that covers acupuncture, we'll be happy to give you a payment receipt, and you can submit it for reimbursement; that's OK with the insurance companies. We also offer simple cash receipts for your own records as well. If you have health insurance, and aren't sure if acupuncture is covered, ask them.

**Our clinic does not receive grants, state or federal money, or insurance reimbursement. It exists because people pay for their treatments, and tell other folks about us. It is a sustainable community business model.**

## *The Community Setting*

Most acupuncture treatments in the United States take place on a table in a room by oneself. However, this is not how most of the world has traditionally received acupuncture, where it has usually occurred in a group setting. We all know the value of power in numbers, right? Would you prefer to eat in an empty restaurant, or one that is full of people and bustling? How about an empty movie theater? Us neither!

A healthy group setting creates a dynamic that can be used for all of our benefit in an acupuncture clinic. Receiving treatment in a community setting has tangible benefits: it's easier for friends and family to come in together; many patients find it a relief to not be left alone and

isolated during their treatment. In addition, our practice allows patients to keep their needles in as long as they want, as we observe the 'right' amount of time varies from person to person.

Most people learn after a few treatments when they feel 'done' or 'cooked'. This can take anywhere from thirty minutes to a couple of hours. You can stay as long as you feel comfortable doing so – or until we close for the day! If you want to be finished at a specific time, ask your acupuncturist. We'll make sure you're out on time.

Otherwise, we prefer you forget about time altogether. When you are feeling as though you are ready to end your visit or need to get our attention, just open your eyes and give us 'a meaningful look'. We'll remove your needles or be available otherwise. **Please, never get up out of your chair, or off the table when the needles are still in(yes, this has happened before!)**

## ***Our Commitment to You...***

We want our community to be welcoming to all different kinds of people. We want to give you tools to take care of your own health so that you need not only rely on an all-too-often impersonal and inefficient medical system offering costly, high-tech interventions. We will provide you with skilled practitioners who continue to sharpen communication and clinical skills through ceaseless education and self-evaluation, in order to provide you with great acupuncture treatments in a safe, trustworthy healing space. We will provide an environment free of judgment. We will always be available to listen to any advice and or feedback you may have about CCA. We will do all of this with a sense of humor and help from you as well.

## ***Your Responsibilities...***

**Understand, we do not provide primary care medicine.** Acupuncture is a wonderful complement to Western medicine, but it is not a substitute for it. If you have, or think you may have a potentially serious condition such as an infection, unexplained weight loss or gain, consistent chest pain, a suspected fracture or dislocation, severe sudden abdominal pain, unexplained bleeding, respiratory distress, etc, or if you want a doctor to go over the details of your medical history, you should either visit your primary care physician or go to the local emergency room, as appropriate. We'd be happy to provide referrals for very capable doctors in the Charleston area. Please do not expect us to diagnose and treat something life threatening. We can provide care for a multitude of conditions very effectively. However, acupuncture is not primary care medicine.

**Flexibility.** The community setting does require some flexibility from you. For instance, some patients have a favorite recliner. When we are busy, someone may be in your favorite chair. Similarly, we have a few patients who may snore. Patients who can't relax with someone snoring can bring earplugs to their treatments. Be creative. We are grateful for this! If you want, you can bring a favorite clean pillow or blanket from home for your treatment. Basically, we need you to make yourself comfortable before we arrive to treat you. So grab a blanket, kick off your shoes and make yourself at home.

**Commitment.** Acupuncture is most often a process. It is unrealistic to expect longstanding health issues to resolve after three or four visits. A typical course of treatment for long-standing conditions in China is acupuncture every other day for three months! Thankfully, most folks do not need such an intense regimen. However, almost all people will require some course of treatment varying in length and frequency, depending on their individual needs. Part of the reason that we are able to keep our prices so low is because of the extraordinary amount of marketing our patients do on our behalf – we do very little advertising otherwise. We are so grateful for this. In fact, truth be told if it were not for happy and vocal patients, this clinic would cease to be. Our patients are such effective marketers because they have first-hand experience of how well acupuncture works. **Almost all of our satisfied patients basically made a commitment to a course of treatment.**

On your first visit, we will suggest a course of treatment, which can be anything *from “we’d like to see you twice a week for four weeks” to “we’d really like to see you every day for the next three days”*. This suggestion is based on our experience treating different kinds of conditions. If you don’t come in often enough or long enough, acupuncture probably won’t work for you. **The purpose of our sliding scale is to help you make that commitment.** If you have questions about how long it will take to see results, please ask us, or if you think you need to adjust your treatment plan, please let us know. **We need you to commit to the process of treatment in order to get the results we both want for you.**

### ***Finally, a word about the treatment rooms ...***

The treatment room is intended to remain a quiet space for you and others to rest, sleep and sort it all out. Its atmosphere exists through our patients relaxing together. We appreciate everyone’s presence...we find this kind of collective stillness a rare and valuable thing in our rushed and isolating society. Maintaining this reservoir of calm requires that no one talk very much in the clinic space – including us. We ask that any speaking be done in a whisper or very low tone of voice. If you would like to speak to your acupuncturist one-on-one at any length, please let us know. We can arrange for time in the office.

Unfortunately, we can’t explain Chinese medical theory or how acupuncture works while we are treating you - these are very large topics! We will do my best to address any and all concerns you may have before treatment begins. If you have questions about acupuncture and how it works, feel free to borrow a book, or go to our website and look for the 'links' section, which will bring you lots of informative websites.

Part of our success relies on our patients learning the “routine” and taking on responsibility for their appointments. Re-scheduling and making payment happens at the front desk **before** each follow-up treatment, so you can relax and enjoy treatment without concern for details afterwards (the exception is today – your first visit). Please take all personal belongings (bags, shoes, etc.) with you back into the treatment rooms where there will be a basket available behind/next to your recliner to put it in. We cannot be responsible for items left in the clinic after your visit. And of course, **please turn off your cell phone or pager before coming into the treatment room, please.**

We hope you'll find yourself comfortable here – and we encourage you to enjoy your time while playing an important part in changing the way health care is delivered in our city – and country.