

Acupuncture is possible for the needlephobic

By **EMMA PALMER**
emma.palmer@nqe.com

TRYPANOPHOBIA, otherwise known as a fear of needles and injections, is said to affect up to 10 per cent of the population.

Even Oscar winning ‘La La Land’ actress Emma Stone admits to being a needle-phobe: “I have a true, genuine blackout, spiral phobia of needles, which was witnessed by this,” the Spider Man beauty told Jay Leno in 2012.

So what do you do when the only way to relieve your pain is through acupuncture, but needles scare you to death?

Katie Goodwin, 31, was faced with this dilemma. In fact she thought she’d have to live with her lower back pain until she eventually faced up to her biggest fear.

When Katie, from Southend, set up her stall at a boot sale three years ago, she thought she must have twisted her back because, shortly after, she started experiencing severe lower back pain. She saw her

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doctor who examined her and said there was nothing that could be done, explaining her back would eventually get better. He prescribed a course of pain killers which could be stopped once the pain subsided.

Katie works in retail, which means she’s on her feet every day, and that made the pain and the accompanying weariness almost unbearable.

After taking the medication every four hours for a month,



■ **Fear of needles - Oscar winning actress Emma Stone**

it was clear the pain wasn’t going anywhere and Katie decided to get a second opinion.

She made an appointment to see chiropractor Arif Soomro, founder of Cliffs Chiropractic Clinic in nearby Trinity Avenue, Southend.

From the initial consultation, which involved an examination and x-rays, taken in the clinic’s on site radiography department, it was clear why Katie was continuing to experience a lot of pain. From his examination Arif could see that the lower back pain was being caused by her right hip. The X-rays revealed there was a loss of joint cartilage in her right hip.

“Cartilage is a tough, flexible tissue found throughout the body; articular cartilage is the tissue on the end of a bone that cushions the surface of the joint, acting like a shock absorber, and is vital for painless, smooth movement,” said Arif.

“Cartilage doesn’t have its own blood supply, so has limited capacity to repair itself when damaged, leading to degenerative joint

conditions like osteoarthritis.”

He continued: “Katie could have carried on taking pain killers, but that would only mask the symptoms not treat the root cause. Minor injuries may get better on their own within a few weeks but Katie’s condition needed more intensive treatment to ease her discomfort and improve her range of movement.”

Arif told Katie that the recommended treatment was medical acupuncture and manipulation. Medical acupuncture is a widely-used complementary medical practice that uses needles, inserted into specific trigger points on the body, to ease muscle tension, stimulate the release of endorphins - the body’s own natural pain killer - which alleviates pain, reduce inflammation and encourage healing.

Katie’s initial reaction was one of abject horror at the sheer thought of having needles put into her skin.

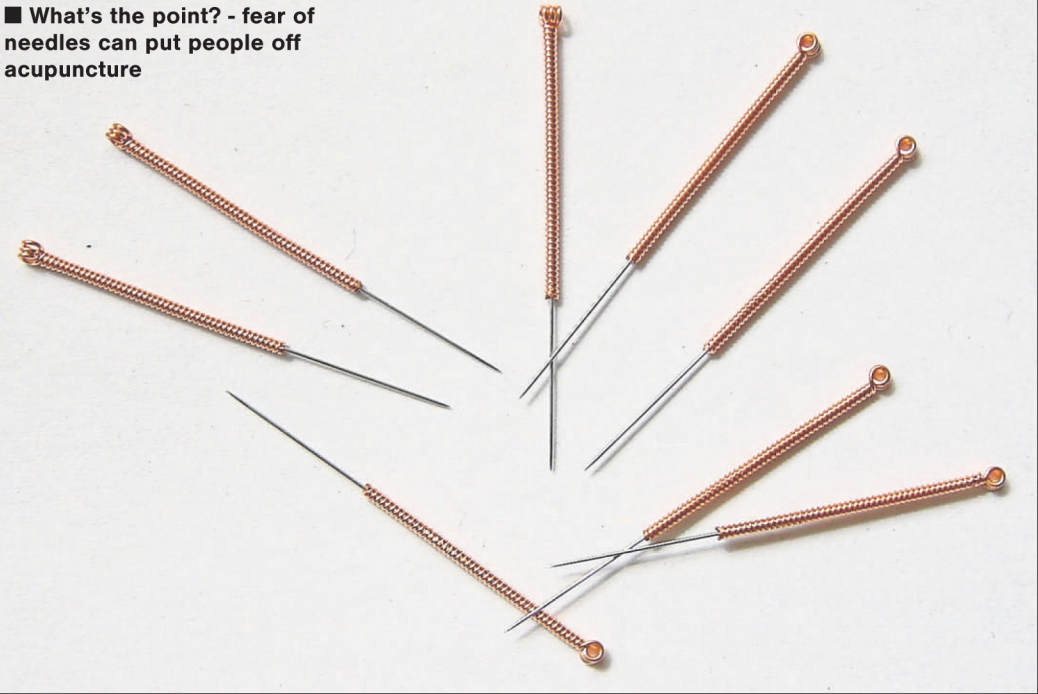
“I’ve had the phobia for as long as I can remember. When I was about 14 my parents paid for me to have a course of hypnotherapy to help get rid of my fear,” she said.

“It found the cause of my fear was from when I was younger and watched my grandad inject insulin for his diabetes.”

Arif also advised Katie to take an Omega pure fish oil supplements as part of the treatment to help boost joint flexibility and reduce inflammation, as well as Glucosamine Chondroitin with MSM - a key structural component of joint cartilage and connective tissues.

After two weeks, and with support from Arif, Katie said she was ready to try acupuncture. Because of Katie’s phobia, they agreed just to use one needle and this would be inserted in the hip joint. “Having acupuncture is a weird feeling,” said Katie. “But Arif always hits the spot and I feel so much better for

■ **What’s the point? - fear of needles can put people off acupuncture**



■ **‘Having acupuncture is a weird feeling, but I feel so much better after’ - Katie Goodwin overcame her fear of needles to have the treatment at Cliffs Chiropractic Clinic**

the treatment. At first I would feel a little faint, but now it’s fine.

“I saw Arif more frequently initially to reduce the pain and help my mobility, but now it’s only once a month. I’ve had bad hips since I was a baby, so I tend to feel a little sore at times, but I know chiropractic and acupuncture treatment will keep my joints mobile and in the best shape possible. I definitely feel far more flexible now.”

Acupuncture also helped Katie after she went on holiday and her ears got blocked up on the plane ride home.

Normally such an irritant clears itself but for Katie, it didn’t. She couldn’t hear properly, nor could she remedy the situation.

She mentioned it to Arif, who used acupuncture – two needles above the lip and one lightly touching her forehead – to solve the problem instantly.

Katie admits her fear of needles has improved somewhat after this whole experience, however she

readily admits it’s still not her favourite thing in the world: “I’m OK with needles now, I think Arif has helped but I’m still not great with injections themselves though. I can’t watch others have injections even on the TV it makes me

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feel faint! But I have managed to have two blood tests in the last year which is a miracle!”

■ **For more information on medical acupuncture visit the British Medical Acupuncture Society www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk or call Cliffs Chiropractic Clinic on 01702 430430 or visit www.cliffschiropractorsouthend.co.uk**



■ **Acupuncture chart**
THE HISTORY OF ACUPUNCTURE

Traditional acupuncture is a branch of traditional Chinese medicine that has been practised for thousands of years in China and the Far East.

The first known book of Chinese Medicine, the Classic of Internal Medicine of the Yellow Emperor, dates back to between the first century BC and the first century AD. All styles of acupuncture currently practised around the world trace their roots back to this text.

Without the help of modern scientific equipment, ancient Chinese scholars discovered many now familiar aspects of biomedical science, such as the effect of emotional stress on the immune system.

In China during the early part of the twentieth century traditional medicine fell out of fashion as symptomatic healthcare treatments were imported from the West along with other cultural influences.

Traditional Chinese medicine remained in the shadow of western medicine until the Long March of 1934-5. Without drugs, anaesthetics or surgery vast numbers of sick and wounded soldiers faced death until doctors of traditional Chinese medicine achieved amazing results using acupuncture and other traditional methods.

From this point on, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and western medicine were practised side by side in China.

■ **Courtesy of the British Acupuncture Council.**