

ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS

Photonic and Veterinary Acupuncture and Why They Work

BY LINDA WHITE

The lovely chestnut Saddlebred mare walks over to the paddock fence and politely accepts our admiration and affection. She has no idea that only her mistress's determination and the application of pioneer veterinary medical advances have saved her from euthanasia. We look down at her feet. This old gal has been badly foundered ... yet she appears to be perfectly comfortable.

Dr. Clare Seagren, a lifelong American Saddlebred owner and exhibitor, has been a veterinarian since 1975. Clare and her husband, Gary, met while attending vet school at Oklahoma State, and opened a veterinary practice together in 1977 in Lexington, Kentucky. In 1996, when Clare's favorite Saddlebred mare foundered and every known treatment failed to alleviate the mare's discomfort, she turned in desperation to a treatment that had been developed by a veterinarian in Queensland, Australia.

The treatment, called equine photonic therapy, was little known in North America – but it worked. Its effects were immediate. With treatments two to three times a week over several weeks, the foundered mare recovered dramatically, to the point where Dr. Clare was able to resume riding and driving her. Today, despite the rotation and collateral damage done by the laminitis, she still walks off sound.

Safe, painless and non-invasive, photonic therapy is, in layman's terms, the scientific application of monochromatic light to particular areas of the skin called "acupuncture points." (*Skeptics please note: these acupuncture meridians, or "chi," do exist. They can be clearly seen with electronic equipment.*) The light gently stimulates the brain to produce the neuro-chemicals that reduce pain, promote healing and increase the body's immune response. The treatment has proven successful on both humans and our four-legged friends for many years. In the horse

industry, photonic therapy is especially effective in treating laminitis, digestive and musculoskeletal disorders.

"Photonic therapy uses specially designed lasers that were patented by Dr. Brian McLaren in Australia," explains Dr. Seagren. "The laser we use is equivalent in the light spectrum to 670 nanometers. These lasers cause no tissue damage, and are absolutely benign. Some lasers, which are used in more invasive procedures, like eye surgeries, do cause tissue changes.

"We have known since the early 1960s that low level laser light could stimulate acupuncture points," she continues, "but the healing powers of light were first mentioned in ancient Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Indian Sanskrit writings. Henri de Mondeville used red light to treat smallpox in the 13th century, as did King Edward II's physician in the 16th century. In 1903, a Danish doctor was awarded a Nobel Prize for treating smallpox and tuberculosis with red light.

"Not surprisingly," she adds, "with the advent of modern antibiotics, suggesting that *light* could be used to treat disease was viewed in some quarters as pseudo-scientific quackery. However, over the last 12 or 13 years rational, advanced scientific methods of non-invasive acupuncture treatment using light have been published worldwide."

We could take this opportunity to recite the unimaginably complex, incomprehensible scientific rationale for why low level laser light has healing effects, but the explanation really boils down to this: All living cells require energy for growth and metabolism. The absorption of specific wavelengths of light provides this energy, which the DNA then synthesizes.

Aha! This occurs much in the same way that the chlorophyll in plants absorbs *sunlight* and performs *photo-*



Dr. Clare Seagren inserts needles at the "chi" points on a horse's back.

synthesis, which we learned about in third grade. Similarly, horse breeders soon learn all about the effects of light on stimulating their broodmares' estrus, or heat cycles.

We know that the skin is light sensitive, and when *light* is applied to acupuncture points, it stimulates or activates a primitive, photo-synthetic ("photo" meaning "light") mechanism.

Delighted with the immediate, obvious results of the photonic therapy, Dr. Seagren sought to expand her knowledge and education. She added to her medical bag by completing a post-graduate veterinary course at the Chi Institute in Gainesville, Florida. "The various meridians, or nerve pathways, of the body are all interrelated," Dr. Clare reminds us. "This is why acupuncture using needles is so effective, either by itself or in combination with photonic acupuncture. The two protocols complement each other very well." At the Chi Institute, veterinarians must perform acupuncture on themselves, so they know what the animal is experiencing, and know what to expect. As we'll see, any discomfort is minimal, and fleeting.

The list of problems to which either form of acupuncture can be effectively applied, by itself or in combination, is impressive. The successful treatment list includes musculoskeletal injuries and arthritic disorders, hormonal and gynecological conditions, male reproductive, neurological and psychological disorders, and dermatological disorders.

If this all sounds a bit far-fetched, you should be aware, dear reader, that it has been demonstrated repeatedly