

Acupuncture in the U.S Military Before Battlefield Acupuncture



Before there was Battlefield Acupuncture

Acupuncture has been practiced by the U.S. Military for quite some time, but that fact is not well known. Acupuncture was used 127 years before Drs. Maj Norman Rich and Lt Col Francis Dimond, MD wrote their article, “Results of Vietnamese acupuncture seen at the Second Surgical Hospital” in the October 1967 Military Medicine Journal (the article referred to observation of the use of acupuncture that occurred in 1965). This is 147 years before sources indicate that acupuncture has been used as an alternative treatment at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the 1980s and 157 years before Dr. Richard Niemtzow was credited with establishing the first military medical acupuncture clinic at the Walson Air Force Hospital in Fort Dix, NJ, in 1995.

In 1838 U.S Navy surgeon, Dr. William S.W. Ruschenberger was using electro-acupuncture to treat his patients, and according to reports curing them too. This is one of the earliest accounts of acupuncture used by the U.S. military. The report was published in 1843 by T. B. Curling in his book titled “A Practical Treatise Disease of the Testis and of the Spermatic Cord and Scrotum.”

Dr. William S.W. Ruschenberger



1807 - 1895

In 1826, at the age of 19 years old he was appointed a "surgeon's mate" in the United States Navy. He was immediately sent to the Pacific, and after his return entered the medical department of the University of Pennsylvania, from which institution he received the diploma of Doctor of Medicine, March '24, 1830. In 1831, he was commissioned as surgeon in the United States Navy



From 1836 to 1839 Dr. Ruschenberger serviced as the Navy's Fleet Surgeon, and in that position he saw tours in Southern Arabia, the Persian Gulf and various parts of the East Indies and China, which at that time were rarely in the track of travel. On October 23, 1839, Dr. Ruschenberger married Miss Mary Baynton Wister, of Germantown, Pennsylvania. At the conclusion of the Civil War Dr. Ruschenberger took over as the commanding officer of the Philadelphia Naval Hospital. He serviced here till he retired in 1869 with the rank of Commander.



In 1871 the United States Navy established the position of medical director. Dr. Ruschenberger was recalled to active duty to service in this position and was promoted to the rank of Commodore (O-7, Rear Admiral Lower Half). When he officially retired in 1873 Dr. Ruschenberger serviced at total of 68 years and 8 months in the US Navy. 43 years on active duty and 26 years on the retirement list. Dr. Ruschenberger serviced as the Vice President of the American Philosophical Society from 1885 – 1895. Dr. Ruschenberger was an accomplished author who published many books and articles. See a brief list of Dr. Ruschenberger literary works on the following page.

Dr. Ruschenberger Published Works

- 1833. A List of the Plants of Chili. In Silliman's Journal.
- 1834. Three Years in the Pacific. 2 Vols.
- 1835. A Voyage around the World
- 1835. A Voyage around the World. Republished in London the same year.
- 1838. Meteorological Observations on a Voyage from Peru to the United States, around Cape Horn. In Silliman's Journal.
- 1845. Hints on the Reorganization of the United States Navy.
- 1846. Elements of Natural History.
- 1850. A Lexicon of Terms used in Natural History.
- 1854. Notes and Commentaries during Voyages to Brazil and China.
- 1856. On the Mercury of New Almaden, California.
- 1867. Statistics of Human Growth.
- 1873. On the Value of Original Scientific Research.
- 1887. An Account of the Institution and Progress of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia during 100 years.

Acupuncture In The U.S Navy

A PRACTICAL TREATISE

DISEASE OF THE TESTIS

AND OF THE

SPERMATIC CORD AND SCROTUM

With Illustrations

BY T. B. CURLING

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PHILADELPHIA:

CAREY AND HART.

1843

Electro-puncture



Electro-puncture has been recently proposed for the cure of hydrocele. It is performed by introducing two acupuncture needles into the sac and connecting one to the positive and the other to the negative pole of a Daniel's constant battery. The action may be kept up from ten minutes to an hour. Dr. Ruschenberger of the U. S. Navy succeeded in curing a case after both seton and injection with iodine had failed, by a single introduction of the needles kept excited for half an hour.

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NAVY

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