

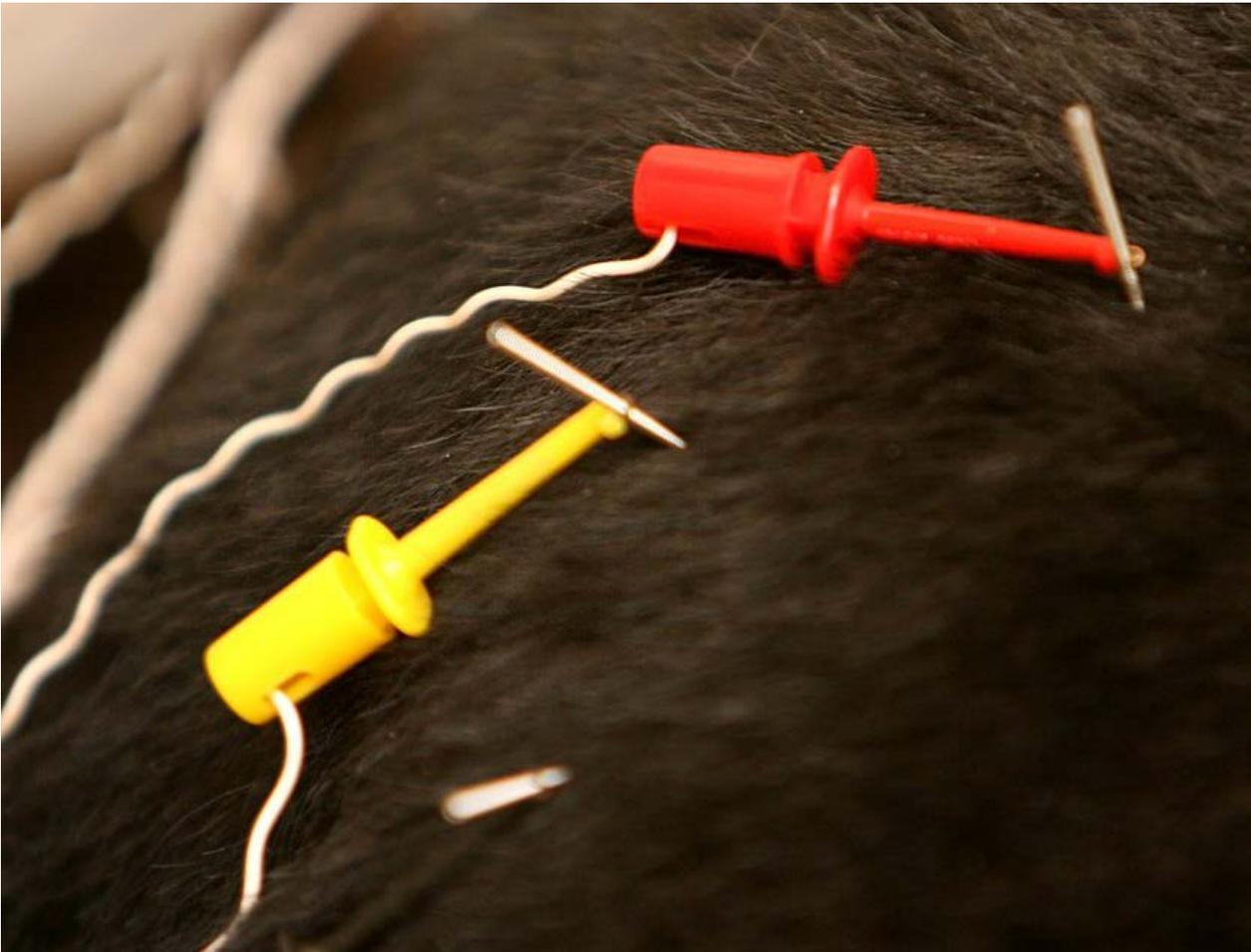


NEWS

REGION: Alternative medicine going to the dogs

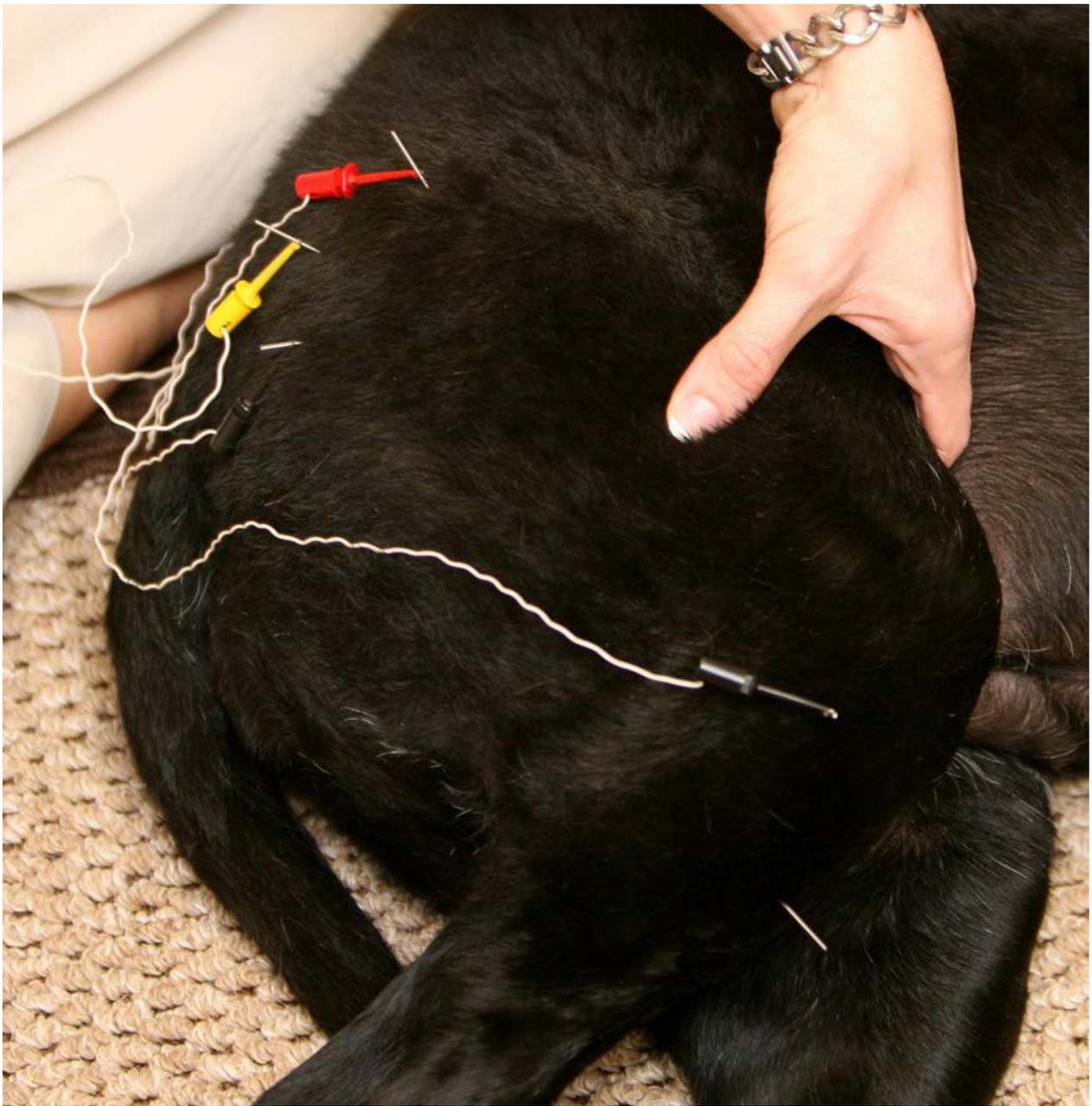
By DAVID OGUL dogul@nctimes.com | 6 p.m. June 29, 2012











Nine-year-old Dewey rested her head in Sharon Cerkan's lap as the doctor poked a series of needles into her damaged hip.

Cerkan kept Dewey calm as electrical currents charged through the pins and shot into muscle. Some 25 minutes later, after the acupuncture session had ended, Dewey rose without hesitation and ran off to the family van.

Dewey, a Chesapeake Bay retriever/black Labrador mix who lives with Cerkan and her husband, Dan, in Carlsbad, is among the growing number of pets in America being treated with everything from acupuncture to herbal therapy for ailments and diseases that traditional medicine has failed to cure.

"It's becoming more mainstream, and the reason it's becoming more mainstream is it's effective," said Dr. Kathy Boehme, a veterinarian and partner at [The Drake Center for Veterinary Care](#) on El Camino Real in Encinitas, where Dewey goes for acupuncture treatments every three weeks.

Boehme calls the strategies used at her clinic integrative medicine. "We're integrating Eastern medicine with Western medicine," she said earlier this month.

Figures are unavailable, but veterinarians who practice alternative medicine say business is booming. A growing number of veterinary schools, including those at Colorado State, Louisiana State and the University of Florida, incorporate integrative medicine into their programs.

"Our membership has grown substantially over the years," said Simon Flynn, the [American Academy of Veterinary Acupuncture](#)'s executive director. The group now has 825 licensed veterinarians.

"People want every advantage brought to their animal that they can find," he said.

Susan Wynn, president of the American Academy of Veterinary Acupuncture and the former president of the [American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association](#), said more people are accepting alternative care for their pets because more people are open to alternative care for themselves.

She added that people often seek alternatives "because scientifically proven medicine has failed them."

Dr. Richard Palmquist is past president of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association, has been a veterinarian since 1983 and has an office in the Los Angeles County city of Inglewood. He said the most popular treatment he uses is therapeutic nutrition ("foods have different kinds of therapeutic properties"), followed by homotoxicology (ridding the body of toxins to stimulate healing), herbs, drugs, acupuncture and then surgery.

"We're seeing a tremendous demand in (alternative) services across the United States," he said. Asked why, Palmquist said, "because they work."

Still, skepticism abounds. For example, the website [Rational Wiki](#) describes

homotoxicology as being based on "quack medicine and pseudoscience. It was concocted by homeopathic crank Hans-Heinrich Reckeweg. According to this idea disease symptoms are responses of the body's attempt to expel 'toxins' that have built up in the system. Homotoxicology denies the central tenets of the reality-based germ theory of disease, and is used primarily to advocate homeopathic products."

Palmquist has heard it before. "I've actually been called the most dangerous veterinarian in veterinary medicine," he said. But as additional research is being conducted at universities across the country, some alternative medicine therapies are gaining acceptance.

Just walk through The Drake Center in Encinitas, where a growing number of people are bringing their pets in for acupuncture treatments, which run about \$70.

"I had heard from friends that had a dog who had undergone some acupuncture, and they said it worked out really well," Sharon Cerkan said. "So I did some research on it and was impressed with what I found."

Dr. Amanda Moore, the veterinarian who has been treating the Cerkans' dog, called acupuncture an effective supplement to traditional medicine.

"The medication she was on was negatively affecting her liver," she said. "We're still using it, but we're using much less."

Acupuncture has helped eliminate much of Dewey's pain. "The dog will feel like using the leg because it's not as painful, and that will help build muscle," she said.

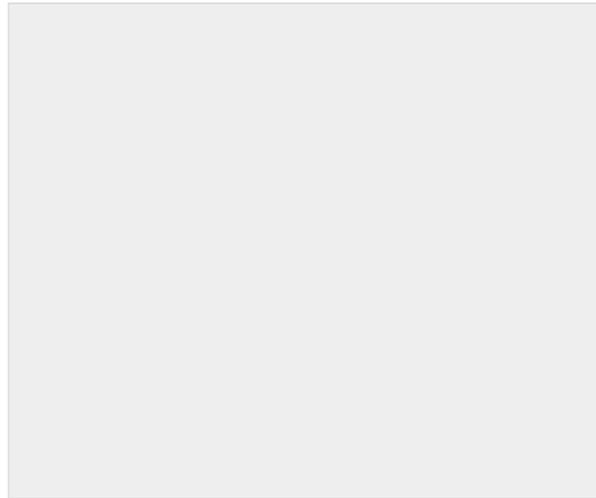
"She's back to her normal puppy self," Sharon Cerkan said. "She's a totally different dog after the treatments."

Dan Cerkan said he and his wife would be looking at surgery if the acupuncture had been ineffective. Hip replacement for a dog would cost up to \$10,000.

To those who would question such efforts going into healing a dog, Dan Cerkan said: "She's part of the family. My grandma had problems, too. I didn't put her down."

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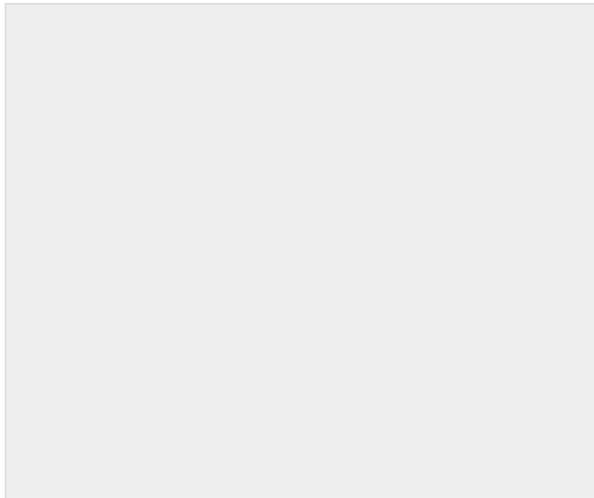
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