

# HEALTH REPORT

VOLUME 11

ISSUE 112

## ACUPRESSURE HELPS STUDENTS STAY MORE WIDE AWAKE IN CLASS!

Throughout the history of education, students have tried all sorts of remedies to stay attentive when a boring professor or lack of proper sleep sends them drifting off in a college class. Drinking coffee, taking commercially available tablets alleged to stop the dozing, or indulging in high-sugar snacks are just a few of them. Now, according to a University of Michigan study, Acupressure may bring new hope to those struggling to stay awake in the classroom.

The study involved teaching students to self-administer Acupressure to a variety of body points on their legs, feet, hands and heads. Some of these points were known to cause more stimulation, others greater relaxation. A total of 39 students in a 3-day On Job/On Campus program took part in the study. The results were published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*.

“Our findings suggested that Acupressure can change alertness in people who are in classroom settings for a full day which could be very good news for students who have trouble staying alert at school.” This comment comes from the director of the study, Dr. Richard E. Harris, Ph.D., in the Dept. of Internal Medicine and a researcher with the U-M Health System’s Chronic Pain and Fatigue Research Center.

The 39 students were taught to self-apply Acupressure regimens on either 5 stimulation points or 5 relaxation points. Techniques consisted of light tapping with the fingers and massaging with thumbs or forefingers. On day one, the first group self-administered Acupressure to the stimulation points followed by the relaxation points on days 2 and 3. The second group used relaxation points the first day and stimulation points on days 2 and 3. The Acupressure was administered mid-day during the student lunch period. Students rated their level of sleepiness in the morning, afternoon and after class using the Stanford Sleepiness Scale (SSS) for evaluation. (The SSS is a self-measurement tool for assessing sleepiness on an 8-point rating from wide awake to fast asleep.)

In each case, the stimulation group had significantly less fatigue than the other group and this has interesting implications for future studies, said Dr. Harris, who himself is a trained acupuncturist. “The study showed that a stimulation Acupressure regimen leads to a statistically significant reduction in sleepiness compared to an Acupressure treatment that focuses on relaxation,” he said.

“The idea that Acupressure can have effects on human alertness needs more study, including research that can examine the scope of influence Acupressure can have on alertness and fatigue,” said Dr. Harris. That research can have an impact on performance in the classroom and in other areas of life where a high state of alertness is mandatory or desirable.