Dental occlusion/temporomandibular joint and general body health

Drs Yong-Keun Lee & Hyung-Joo Moon discuss clinical evidence and mechanism of an underestimated relationship

Correlation between trigger points and acupuncture points

Although separated by two millennia, the traditions of acupuncture and myofascial pain therapies share fundamental similarities in the treatment of pain disorders. Recent reports have suggested substantial anatomic, clinical and physiological overlap of the myofascial trigger points and acupuncture points. The analogy between the trigger points and acupuncture points has been discussed since 1977, when 300 per cent anatomic and 71 per cent clinical pain correspondences for the myofascial trigger points and acupuncture points in the treatment of pain disorders were reported. Moreover, many studies have compared these points and have shown that the acupuncture points located at the trigger points are not frequently used by acupuncturists, and do not share the same clinical indications as the trigger point therapy. It was further argued that the claim of 71 per cent correspondence between the acupuncture points and the trigger points is conceptually impossible. Furthermore, even putting this conceptual problem aside, no more than 40 per cent of the acupuncture pain points correspond to the treatment for pain and, more likely, only approximately 18 to 19 per cent of the points are actually correlated. The correlation between the trigger points and the acupuncture points clearly need to be further investigated in the future.

The fascial connection theory we propose can explain the functional connection between dental occlusion/TMJ and other parts of the body based on either myofascial release or the qi and meridian system, or a combination of both. Therefore, dental occlusion/TMJ and general body health should be treated as part of one functional system, and it is clear that this system plays an essential role in maintaining a normal natural condition, while causes for deterioration of the TMJ status should be treated in an effort to restore the natural condition.