



Caritas Health Group

Misericordia Community Hospital

Physiotherapy Department Phone # (780) 735-2757

## INTRAMUSCULAR STIMULATION

Intramuscular stimulations (IMS) is a method of treating certain conditions that cause chronic pain. It has been proven effective in treating various kinds of chronic neck, shoulder and lower back pain as well as other conditions, caused when an oversensitive nerve keeps a muscle contracted for too long. The muscle becomes shortened, causing distortion and further pain in other muscles and tissues.

Because this kind of "neuropathic" pain is not caused by any obvious injury, it can be difficult to treat with current therapies. IMS directly treats the cause of the pain by relaxing the shortened muscle and allowing it to return to its normal state. A trained therapist inserts very fine needles (similar to those used in acupuncture) into the shortened muscle at the points where it is tight. The needles change the electrical potential of the muscle, and cause micro-injuries that stimulate blood circulation and healing.

The needles cause almost no pain when inserted into normal muscle. They cause painful cramping when they are inserted into a shortened muscle; but after the muscle cramps, it relaxes. With weekly treatments over several weeks, the initial pain is followed by long-term relief for many patients. (For lower back pain, studies have found the average number of treatments required is approximately eight).

IMS was developed by Dr. Chan Gunn while he was a clinician with the Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia. Dr. Gunn is currently a clinical professor at the University of Washington and teaches IMS at the world-renowned Washington Multidisciplinary Pain Centre. He also practices in Vancouver where he has founded the Physical Medicine Research foundation and the Institute for the Study and Treatment of Pain.

IMS uses some of the tools of acupuncture, but it differs fundamentally in that it is based on current western research in physiology, rather than Chinese medicine. IMS is applied directly to the source of the pain, rather than to remote points based on maps of energy flow.

IMS treatments are carried out at the Misericordia Hospital by trained therapists who are certified by Dr. Gunn, using single-use disposable needles. This treatment is not provided through the Community Rehabilitation Program. Patients need to pay directly, and may be reimbursed by their insurers.

For more information about IMS, please call the Rehabilitation Department at the Misericordia at 735-2757.