



## What are they doing to me? Chocolate the dachshund turns guinea pig as vets use acupuncture to cure his back problem

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It is Friday morning at the Marina Street Okada animal hospital in Tokyo and the waiting room is already full of four-legged patients, fidgeting paws and yapping barks.

The pets are here to receive acupuncture treatment, a therapy normally performed on humans which is growing in popularity for man's best friend.

Chocolate, a miniature dachshund, is being prepared for treatment for a lumbar disk herniation and a nurse calms the nervous dog with a kiss on the nose.

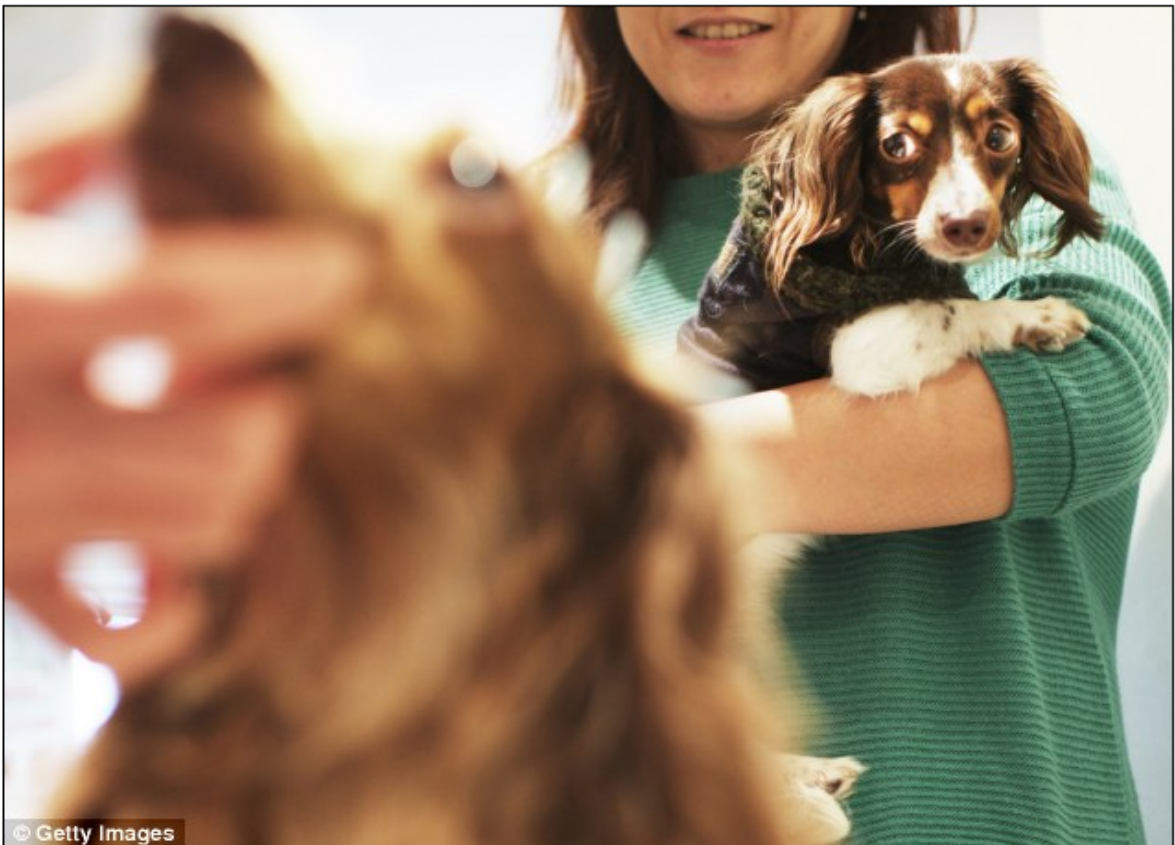


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**Dog days:** Miniature dachshund Chocolate receives acupuncture therapy to help with lumbar disk herniation at an animal hospital in Tokyo, Japan



**Kiss for luck: Chocolate's owner gives him a cuddle as he receives laser acupuncture therapy as part of his treatment at Tokyo's Marina Street Okada animal hospital**



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**Up next: Vanilla, another dachshund, has come in for her first treatment is anxiously watching Chocolate being prepared for acupuncture therapy**

Veterinarian Satoshi Okada inserts the acupuncture needles at specific 'acupoints' on the dog's forehead and back, manipulating them with his fingers to relieve Chocolate of his pain and help heal the disc.

Chocolate and fellow mini dachshund Vanilla are just two of today's patients at Marina Street Okada animal hospital which are being treated with the same ancient Asian medicine their owners would use to relieve pain, nausea or aid fertility.

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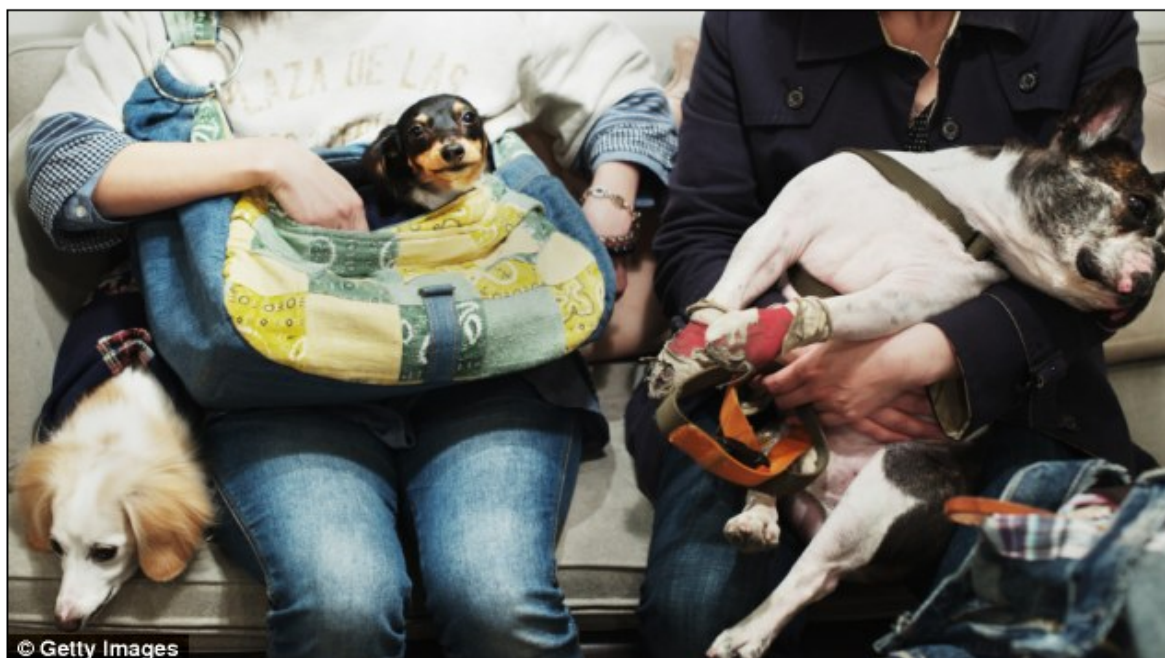
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Acupuncture is one of the key components in traditional Chinese medicine and has been practiced in east Asia for thousands of years.

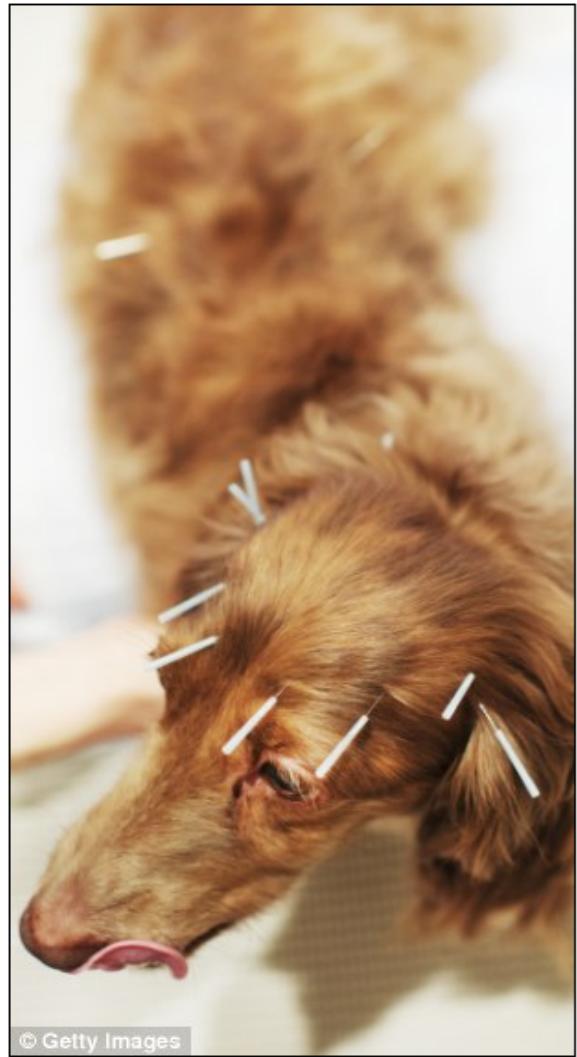
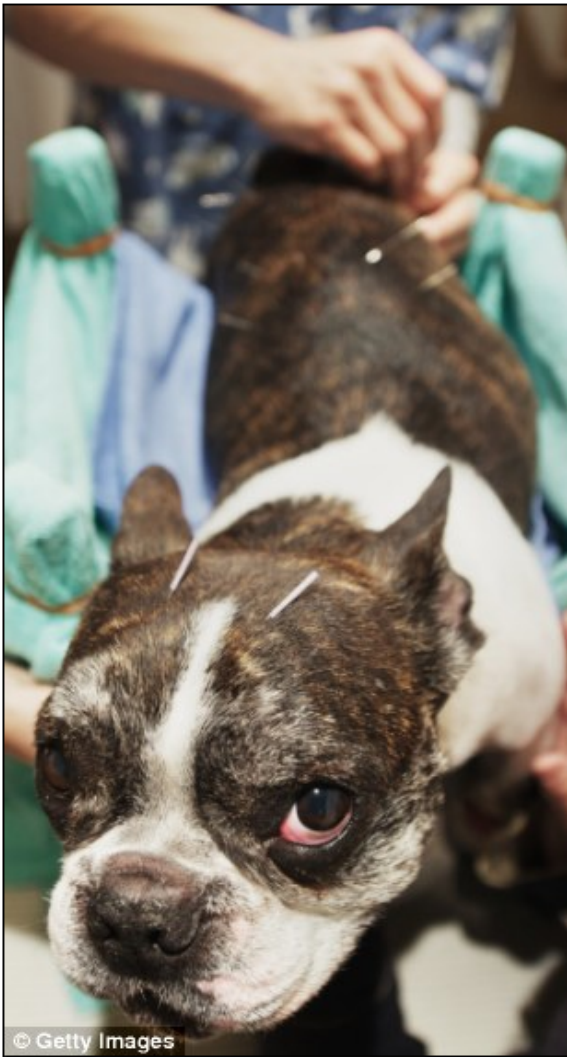
Hieroglyphs and drawings of acupuncture dating back to the Shang Dynasty, around 1500 BC, have been found in China, but evidence suggests the practice of perforating the skin to relieve pain may have been around since the Stone Age.



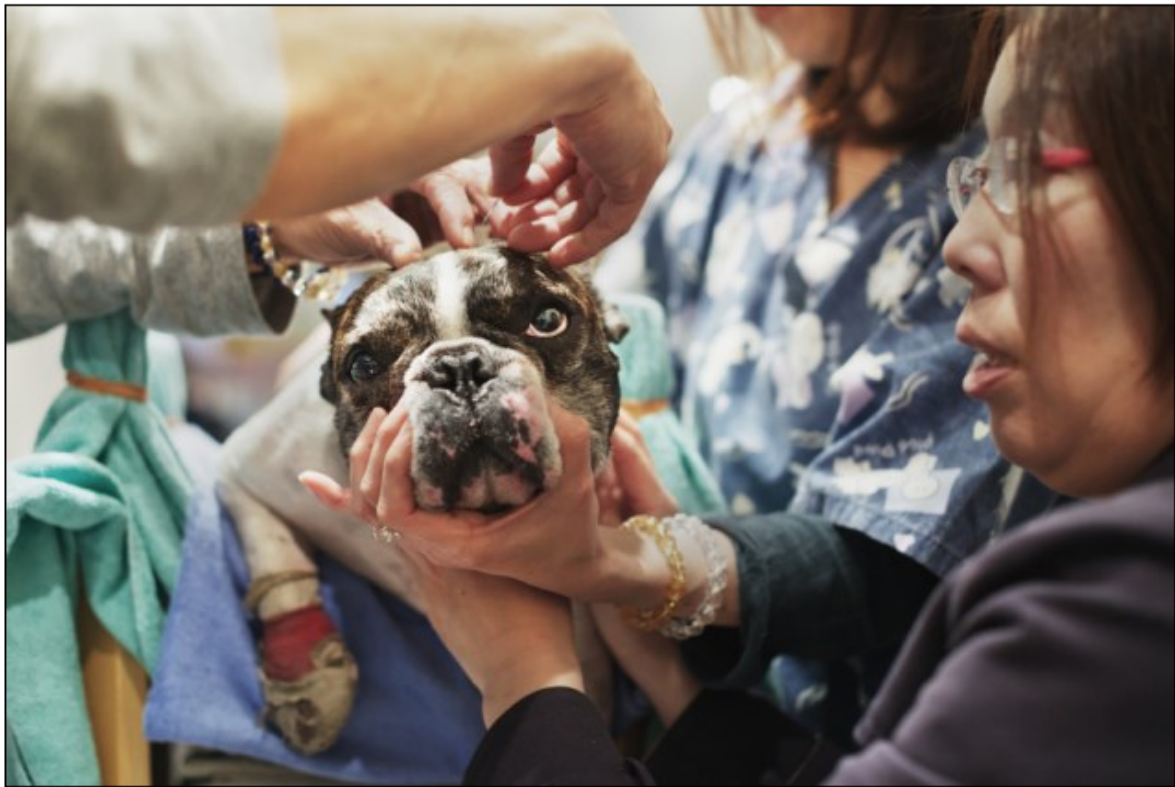
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On pins and needles: The waiting room at Marina Street Okada animal hospital is lined with dog and owners who have come in for acupuncture treatments

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**Helping hands: By inserting the needles at the 'acupoints' in Oreo and Chocolate's back and head, vet Satoshi Okada claims to be able to treat allergies, skin problems and neurological problems such as facial paralysis**



**Energy flow:** Oreo the Bulldog is held still while a vet inserts the needles at specific points on its head to stimulate the flow of Qi energy

Acupuncture for animals have been around for centuries, according to the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society, and is commonplace in Japan.

With number of domestic pet dogs in the country hitting 11.5million, almost one-fifth households., many turn to the same treatments they would use themselves for their four-legged friends.

Dog acupuncture is mainly used to relieve pain from musculoskeletal problems such as Chocolate's slipped lumbar disc, arthritis and nerve damage, but has also been effective to treat skin allergies, gastrointestinal problems and respiratory problems such as heaves or asthma.



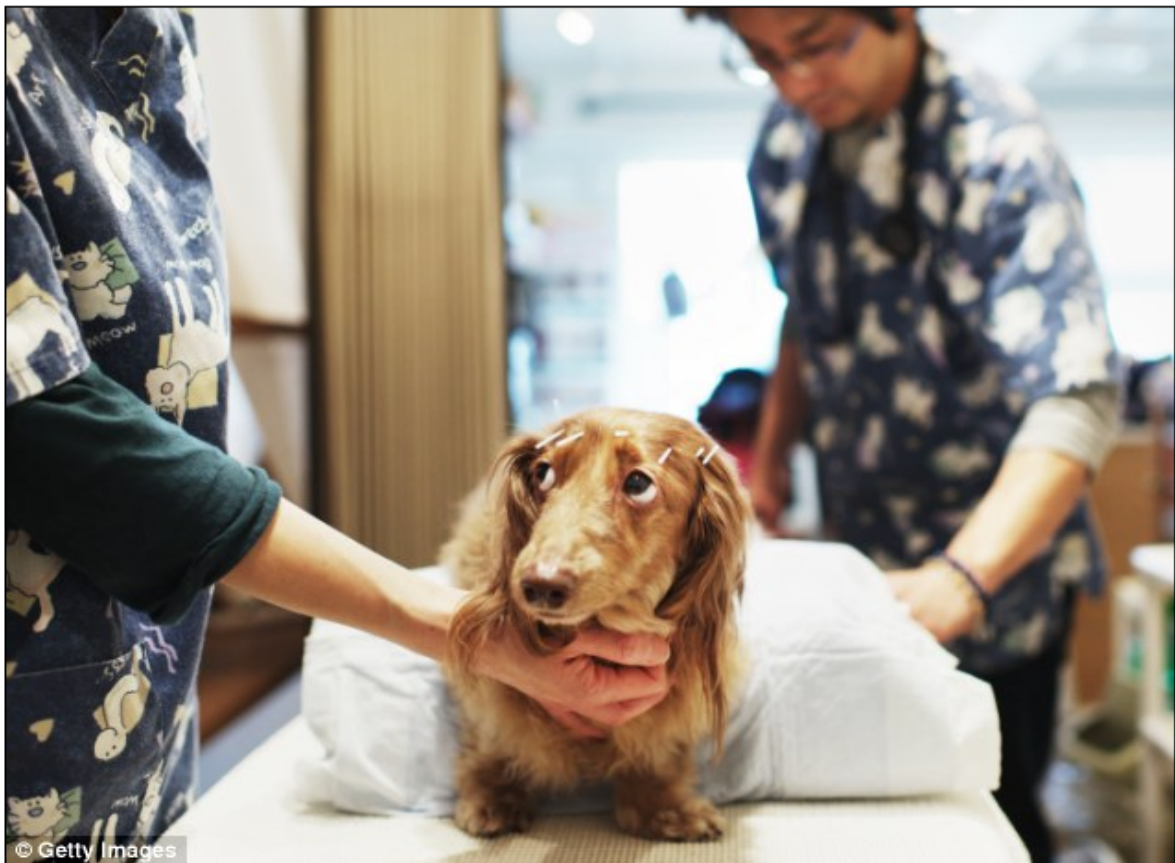
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**Old ways:** Acupuncture is an ancient tradition in east Asia and has been used to treat pets for thousands of years, both in China and Japan



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**Popular practice: Pet acupuncture began spreading across the globe after its human counterpart became mainstream**



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**Are we done yet? Chocolate looks up at the veterinary nurse with pleading eyes after the acupuncture needles have been placed in his forehead**



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**Man's best friend:** The number of pets in Japan has hit 11.5 million, with ten per cent of families owning at least one dog, and many turn to the same ancient medicinal practices they would themselves when their pets fall ill

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