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Waller

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[54] **ACUPUNCTURE NEEDLE**

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[58] **Field of Search** 66/117; 128/329, 330; 132/68, 69, 71

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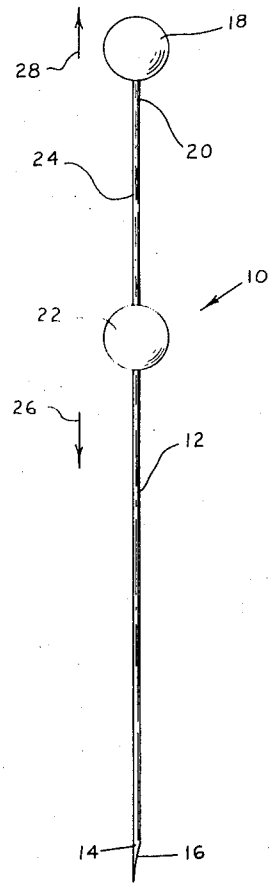
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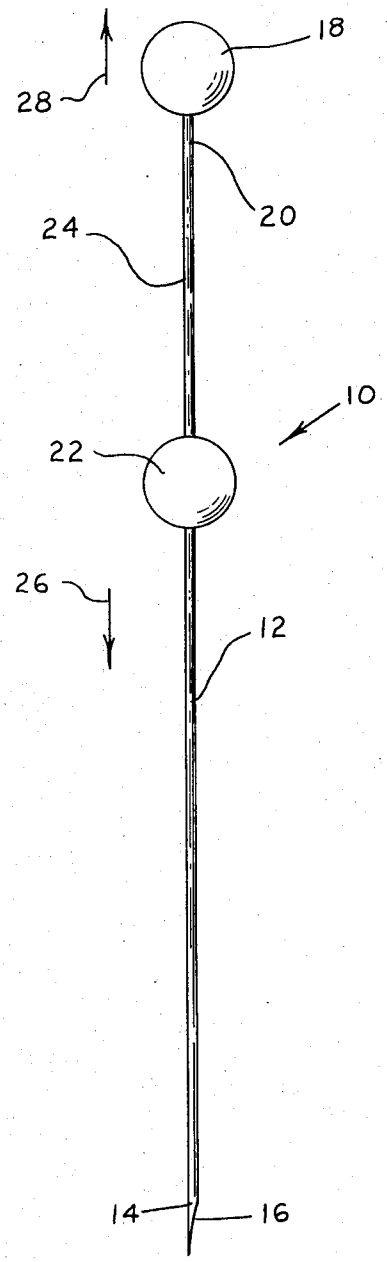
Primary Examiner—Channing L. Pace

[57] **ABSTRACT**

An acupuncture needle which comprises an elongated shaft sharply pointed at one end. The shaft is provided with first and second elements adjacent the center and the end thereof distal the pointed end which define therebetween a shaft portion adapted to be grasped and manipulated by the fingers, the elements providing a guide for the fingers when inserting, removing, and rotating the needle.

6 Claims, 1 Drawing Figure




18
28
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16

ACUPUNCTURE NEEDLE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a needle for use in acupuncture treatment of patients and in particular to such a needle provided with means for positioning the fingers of the practioner thereon when using the needle.

2. Description of the Prior Art

The art or science of acupuncture is ancient and widely practiced in Eastern countries and, recently, has been introduced into Western countries. This art or science in simpliest terms, comprises the medical treatment of a variety of physical illnesses by means of the therapeutic insertion of small, sharply pointed needles at selected points of a patient's body. Typical prior art acupuncture needles comprise an elongated shaft, sharply pointed at one end and provided at the distal end thereof with a handle or the like manipulation element. Typically, these elements have comprised a length of wire spirally and coaxially wound on the end of the needle distal the pointed end thereof or a small helical spring affixed to the distal end of the needle and extending transversely with respect thereto. The handle element facilitates insertion and removal of the needle and facilitates rotation of the needle after it has been inserted.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is an acupuncture needle which comprises an elongated shaft. One end of the shaft is sharply pointed. A pair of guide elements, these being spherical beads in a preferred embodiment of the invention, are fixedly secured to the needle shaft at the end thereof distal the pointed end and adjacent the center thereof, respectively. The beads define therebetween a portion of the needle shaft which is used to manipulate the needle after it has been inserted and to facilitate insertion and removal thereof.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the needle and the beads are stainless steel, the beads being welded to the needle shaft. The pointed end of the needle is hollow ground.

It is therefore an object of the invention to provide an improved acupuncture needle.

It is another object of the invention to provide an acupuncture needle which includes a plurality of guide elements to facilitate insertion, removal, and manipulation of the needle.

It is still another object of the invention to provide an acupuncture needle which is simple in construction, economical to produce and adapted for sterilization and packaging.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

The above-mentioned and other features and objects of this invention and the manner of attaining them will become more apparent and the invention itself will be best understood by reference to the following description of an embodiment of the invention taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawing showing the invention in plan view.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to the drawing, there is shown an acupuncture needle **10.** The needle comprises an elongated shaft **12.** Preferably, shaft **12** is made of a stiff, resilient solid stainless steel wire. End **14** of shaft **12** is pointed as at **16.** Preferably, end **14** is hollow ground in the manner used for forming the pointed end of a hypodermic needle.

A first spherical bead **18** is provided with an axially extending hole (not shown) extending therethrough whereby it is received on the end **20** of shaft **12** distal pointed end **14.** Preferably, bead **18** is also made of stainless steel and is secured as by welding.

A second spherical bead **22** is also provided with a centrally extending hole (not shown), the shaft **12** being received therethrough. Bead **22** is positioned in spaced-apart relationship to bead **18** and adjacent the middle portion of shaft **12** and is also secured as by welding. Preferably, bead **22** is also made of stainless steel.

In the alternative, beads **18** and **22** may be formed of glass or plastic, the only requirement being that the beads **18, 22** be readily sterilizable by conventional techniques.

In use, the portion **24** of acupuncture needle **10** disposed between beads **18, 22** is grasped between the thumb and index finger of the practioner. By properly spacing beads **18, 22,** the beads **18, 22** are engaged by the practioner's thumb and index finger simultaneously with engagement of portion **24.** Correspondingly, bead **22** serves as a means for applying pressure in the direction of arrow **26** for insertion of the acupuncture needle **10.** Conversely, bead **18** provides a means for exerting a force in a direction of arrow **28** to thereby remove the acupuncture needle **10.**

In practice, the acupuncture needle **10** is rotated about its longitudinal axis when it is inserted. It will thus be apparent that beads **18, 22** also function to increase rotational leverage thereby facilitating rotation thereof by the practioner. It will further be apparent that, by reason of the spacing between beads **18, 22,** the beads **18, 22** function as guide elements for positioning the practioner's fingers on portion **24** and reduce or eliminate the possibility of slippage of the practioner's fingers longitudinally on the shaft **12.**

In working embodiments of the invention, the shaft **12** is fabricated from 26 to 40 A.W.G. stainless steel wire and has a length of 1 and ½ to 3 inches, 30 gauge A.W.G. wire in a length of 1 11/16 inches being preferred. Beads **18, 22** have a diameter from 1/8 to 3/16 of an inch, 1/8 of an inch in diameter being the preferred dimension. Beads **18, 22** may be spaced from ½ inch to 5/8 of an inch apart, a spacing of 9/16 of an inch being preferred.

While there have been described above the principles of this invention in connection with specific apparatus, it is to be clearly understood that this description is made only by way of example and not as a limitation to the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An acupuncture needle comprising an elongated, wirelike shaft of rigid material and of uniform cross-section, one end of said shaft having a hollow ground point, said shaft including first and second elements thereon adjacent the end of said shaft distal said point, said elements being longitudinally spaced apart and defining therebetween a shaft portion, the distance between said elements being dimensioned such that said

shaft portion and said elements may be simultaneously grasped and manipulated by the fingers of one hand.

2. The needle of claim **1** wherein said first and second elements are beads.

3. The needle of claim **1** wherein said beads are generally spherical.

4. The needle of claim **2** wherein said beads and said shaft are made of stainless steel, said beads being axially received on and being welded to said shaft.

5. The needle of claim **4** wherein said shaft is from one and ½ to 3 inches in length and being made of wire between 26 and 40 A.W.G. gauge, said first and second elements being longitudinally spaced apart ½ to ⅝ of an inch, said beads having a diameter from ⅛ to 3/16 of an inch.

6. The needle of claim **4** wherein said shaft has a length of 1 11/16 inches and is made of 30 gauge, solid stainless steel wire, said first and second elements having a diameter of ⅛ of an inch and being spaced 9/16 of an inch apart.

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