Written by Harriet Hall
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Superstition and nonsense have infiltrated military medicine. The military was never known for critical thinking; in fact, it is often said that "military intelligence" is an oxymoron. When I was in the Air Force we used to say that the difference between the Air Force and the Boy Scouts was that the Boy Scouts had adult leadership. But now they have outdone themselves: the lunatics have taken over the asylum.

Instead of getting narcotics for pain relief, wounded soldiers are being stuck in the ear with little needles. This has been happening for some time in our best military hospitals including Walter Reed. As if that weren't silly enough, now the Air Force is training military physicians in "battlefield acupuncture." For details, see Dr. David Gorski's scathing indictment at www.sciencebasedmedicine.org
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I asked my husband what he would do if he were wounded on a battlefield and a medic tried to use acupuncture on him. He said, "I'd shoot him." [Riflepuncture?]

Regular acupuncture would be bad enough, since there is no convincing evidence that it works any better than a placebo; but they are using ear acupuncture, a fantasy invented in 1957 by a Frenchman who was inspired by the thought that the outer ear looked like a curled representation of the human body. Col. Niemtzow, the primary instigator of this insanity, says, "The ear acts as a "monitor" of signals passing from body sensors to the brain." Sure it does. On what planet?

As an Air Force nurse once told me, "The Air Force is like a condom: it gives you a sense of security while you're getting screwed." I'd say battlefield acupuncture is a prime example of what she meant.

What next? Homeopathic jet fuel? Incantations on the pre-flight checklist?