

Novel Osteopathic Visceral Technique for the Pancreas

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DESCRIPTION

The pancreas is an organ of the digestive system and endocrine system of vertebrates. In humans, it is located in the abdomen behind the stomach and functions as a gland. The pancreas is a mixed or heterocrine gland, *i.e.*, it has both an endocrine and a digestive exocrine function. 99% of the pancreas is exocrine and 1% is endocrine. As an endocrine gland, it functions mostly to regulate blood sugar levels, secreting the hormones insulin, glucagon, somatostatin and pancreatic polypeptide. As a part of the digestive system, it functions as an exocrine gland secreting pancreatic juice into the duodenum through the pancreatic duct. This juice contains bicarbonate, which neutralizes acid entering the duodenum from the stomach; and digestive enzymes, which break down carbohydrates, proteins and fats in food entering the duodenum from the stomach.

Inflammation of the pancreas is known as pancreatitis, with common causes including chronic alcohol use and gallstones. Because of its role in the regulation of blood sugar, the pancreas is also a key organ in diabetes mellitus. Pancreatic cancer can arise following chronic pancreatitis or due to other reasons, and carries a very poor prognosis, as it is often only identified after it has spread to other areas of the body.

The pancreas is an organ that in humans lies in the abdomen, stretching from behind the stomach to the left upper abdomen near the spleen. In adults, it is about 12–15 centimetres (4.7–5.9 in) long, lobulated, and salmon-coloured in appearance.

Anatomically, the pancreas is divided into a head, neck, body, and tail. The pancreas stretches from the inner curvature of the duodenum, where the head surrounds two blood vessels: The superior mesenteric artery and vein. The longest part of the pancreas, the body, stretches across behind the stomach, and the tail of the pancreas ends adjacent to the spleen.

Two ducts, the main pancreatic duct and a smaller accessory pancreatic duct run through the body of the pancreas. The main pancreatic duct joins with the common bile duct forming a small ballooning called the ampulla of Vater (hepatopancreatic ampulla). This ampulla is surrounded by a muscle, the sphincter of Oddi. This ampulla opens into the descending part of the duodenum. The opening of the common bile duct into main pancreatic duct is controlled by sphincter of Boyden. The accessory pancreatic duct opens into duodenum with separate openings located above the opening of the main pancreatic duct.

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