

Acupuncture Research Update

"When we have peace in our hearts and minds, we draw peace into our lives." - Iyanla Vanzant

Acupuncture and Side Effects of Chemotherapy



A 2018 study published in the World Journal of Acupuncture-Moxibustion looked at the effect of acupuncture treatments on rectal cancer patients who were experiencing hand-foot syndrome caused by their chemotherapy treatments. Hand-foot syndrome is a known side effect of chemotherapy characterized by redness, swelling, tingling, numbness, itching and pain in the palms of the hands and soles of the feet.

The researchers found acupuncture significantly reduced all of the symptoms associated with hand-foot syndrome to the extent they considered 17 percent of patients completely cured and the treatments were significantly effective in 70 percent of patients.

To conduct the study, researchers from Chongqing Cancer Institute recruited 60 patients with rectal cancer undergoing chemotherapy. Half of the patients received acupuncture and half were treated simply by taking B6 vitamins. Their hand-foot syndrome was scored using two internationally recognized scales indicating symptom severity and physical disability.

The patients in the acupuncture group received 30-minute treatments every day for two weeks. The patients in the B6 vitamin group took the supplement daily for two weeks.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, hand-foot syndrome indicates poor qi and blood circulation, a deficiency in qi and blood or dampness leading to a blockage in qi that prohibits nourishment from reaching the skin and muscles, causing numbness and pain. The acupuncture treatments were directed at promoting blood and qi circulation and removing stagnation.

After the treatments, patients in both groups showed improvement, but symptoms and physical disabilities for the patients in the acupuncture group decreased significantly more than for the patients in the B6 vitamin group. Based on the analysis of the scores, in the acupuncture group, the treatments cured five patients were effective for 16 patients, meaning their symptom score was downgraded to the lowest possible number on the scale and their physical ability score increased to between 80 and 89 out of 100 possible points. The treatments were effective for 70 percent of patients compared with 36 percent of patients in the B6 vitamin group.

The report concludes, "The results demonstrate that an integrative model of patient care utilizing acupuncture as a treatment modality produces significantly less adverse effects associated with chemotherapy."

Research consistently shows acupuncture is effective at increasing circulation throughout the body, improving the flow of blood and therefore nutrients to injured cells, muscles or tissues.

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