Cancer Acupuncture

Lawrence L. Prokop, DO
Associate Professor
Dept of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
Michigan State University
College of Osteopathic Medicine
Acupuncture

- NIH Definition:
  - A family of procedures involving stimulation of anatomical locations on the skin by a variety of techniques. The most studied mechanism of stimulation of acupuncture points uses penetration of the skin by thin, solid, metallic needles, which are manipulated manually or by electrical stimulation.
Effects of Medical Acupuncture

- World Health Organization has acupuncture treatment for all diagnoses in ICD-10.
- MedAc used to “improve energy” in the area treated
  - Such as increase GI motility for constipation
  - Increase cortisol release for inflammation treatment
- Accomplishes this by working toward a homeostatic balance
  - Stimulating the acupuncture points to increase energy in an area of deficient energy in the system addressed, as hypothyroidism
  - Stimulating the acupuncture points to decrease energy in an area of excessive energy in the system addressed, as URI or inflammation
  - Stimulating release of endorphins and cortisol
Medical Acupuncture in Cancer Treatment

- American Academy of Medical Acupuncture
  - Not a replacement for standard Medical & Surgical treatment
  - Auxiliary treatment for side effects of CA & CA treatment
    - Pain – From Cancer, post-operative
    - Inflammation
    - Nausea and vomiting – Used before, after & between CTX
    - Boost immune system – Used with nutrition and in energetics style (UCLA Oncology Dept)
    - Boost energy levels
Medical Acupuncture in Cancer Treatment

- NIH reports benefits in treatment-related side effects:
  - Nausea & vomiting
  - Post operative pain
  - Cancer related pain
  - Chemotherapy-induced leukopenia
  - Post-chemotherapy fatigue
  - Xerostomia
  - Possibly insomnia
  - Possibly anxiety
  - Possibly quality of life
Negative aspects of MedAc CA Treatment

- No evidence of improvement in RTX induced nausea and vomiting (Canadian Cancer Society)
- One report of cutaneous spread of breast cancer following MedAc
**Energetics vs Neuroanatomic Med Ac**

- Energetics: An acupuncture technique to improve bodily function by stimulation of acupuncture points and channels
  - Generally with needles
  - By heat
  - By laser – developing technology
Energetics vs Neuroanatomic

- **Neuroanatomic**: An acupuncture technique where needles are inserted for stimulation of a specific area, primarily a pain control treatment.
  - Needles at or around the area of pain
  - Stimulated to increase endorphin production (Tonification)
    - Manually
    - With electrical stimulation
    - With heat
    - With laser (developing technology)
  - Not stimulated to decrease inflammation by increasing cortisol release from the adrenals (Dispersion)
Techniques of needle use

- One needle insertion technique (Demonstration)
  - Hold needle at junction of handle and body between thumb and index
  - Stabilize body of needle with middle finger
  - Slide tip of middle finger just past tip of needle
  - Touch middle finger to skin
  - Force middle finger down on skin without letting needle slip
  - Needle carries into skin
  - Advance and twist to secure needle
Fig. 2.11  Holding the needle. Positioned in this way the fingers look like a bird’s beak.
Fig. 2.21  One-handed needle insertion.
Techniques of needle use

- Insertion tube technique (Demonstration)
  - Place insertion tube on skin
  - Drop needle into tube, end of needle stands above end of tube
  - Firmly tap needle to drive tip into skin
  - Remove tube
  - Secure needle by advancing and twisting it
Techniques for needle use

- One needle technique
  - Insert needle at acupuncture point or at painful point
  - Leave in for ~ 20 mins to decrease inflammation and pain
  - Can stimulate needles manually or with heat to increase effect
Technique for needle use

- Two needle technique
  - Insert 2 needles and approximate the tips
  - Attach to stimulator
  - Stimulate for 15 – 30 mins at 2 – 8 Hz
  - Increase the stimulus every 5 mins to increase endorphin release
Techniques for needle use

- Special technique for swelling and inflammation
  - Circle the area with needles ~1/8" apart
  - Leave in without stimulation for 15 – 20 mins
  - Swelling & pain decreases.
Needle Safety

- Metal Allergy – watch for inflammation
- Puncture of organ – Rare but reported
- Infection transmission – Anecdotal reports
- Hematoma &/o bleeding – in clotting deficiency or anti-coagulation
- Needle shock – 2% will have hypotension to needling
- Euphoria
Bilateral Tension Pneumothoraces After Acupuncture
Important Medical Acupuncture Points

- GV-20: Mid-sagittal suture in a depression at a line connecting top of ears, the vertex of the head.

- Function:
  - Relaxation
  - Mental Disorder Tx
  - Disorders of consciousness
Governor Vessel - 20
Important Medical Acupuncture Points

- **LI-4**: Nodule or depression in 1st dorsal interosseous muscle of hand, lateral to 2nd metacarpal, webspace
- **Functions:**
  - Most powerful pain treatment for head, neck, UE.
  - “Headache Point.”
  - Decrease fever.
  - Aids in relaxation and “Disorders of the Spirit & Mind.”
Large Intestine - 4
Important Medical Acupuncture Points

- **ST-36**: Depression in tibialis anterior 4 fingers distal to tibial tubercle and 1 thumb lateral of tibial crest.
- **Functions:**
  - Most powerful pain Tx point for LE’s, pelvis, low back
  - Aids in treating abdominal disorders
Stomach - 36
Important Medical Acupuncture Points

- MH-6 (Pericardium 6): 3 fingers proximal to the distal wrist crease between the flexor carpi radialis & palmaris longus tendon

- Functions:
  - Tx GI distress: Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, as from CTX
  - Hyperemesis gravidarum
Master of the Heart - 6
Important Medical Acupuncture Points

- Ming Men
  - GV-4: Inferior margin of L-2 spinous process.
  - BL-23: Lateral to GV-4 at lateral paraspinal margin, at the tip of the transverse process of L2.
  - BL-52: Lateral to BL-23 at next cleavage plane, approximately 2 ½" - 3" lateral of midline from inferior border of L2 spinous process.

- Function:
  - Overlies the kidneys
  - “When in doubt, tonify the Kidney”- Kidney is seen as the center of Qi and energy in the body.
  - Stimulate with Ming Men to increase the patient’s energy
Ming Men – GV-4
Ming Men – BL 23
Ming Men – BL 52
Powerful Relaxation Technique

- Insert 5 needles
- Leave in for 20 mins in dispersion (no stimulation)
- 5 needles
  - GV-20
  - LI-4 bilaterally
  - ST-36 bilaterally
Why do Medical Acupuncture on CA Patients?

- As a sole treatment – Not advised
  - You still need the medications
  - You still need the surgeries

- As a symptomatic aid in the total treatment of the patient – Can help without side effects of more medications
Major side effects of Cancer and CA treatment

- Pain
  - Direct from cancer
  - From cancer treatment
  - From overuse of joints, tendons, muscles

- Inflammation
  - Often from overuse of somatic structures
Major Side Effects of Cancer & CA Tx

- Fatigue
  - Direct from cancer
  - From cancer treatment
  - From overuse in a depleted patient

- Nausea and vomiting
  - MH-6 – The nausea point.
    - Can teach patient of family to do this with needles or with surface pressure with a ball point pen
Major Effects of Medical Acupuncture

- Anti-inflammatory
  - From stimulating release of cortisol from adrenals by stimulating around the area of complaint

- Analgesic
  - From stimulating release of endorphins with local treatment to the area of complaint
  - Additive – the more you do, the longer it lasts

- Energy boost
  - Ming Med – Tonify the Kidney
Major Effects of Medical Acupuncture

- Energy boost
  - Ming Med – Tonify the Kidney
- Decrease Nausea & Vomitting
  - MH-6 – The nausea point.
    - Can teach patient of family to do this with needles or with surface pressure with a ball point pen, blunted 10 penny nail, or thumb nail
References


- Mak E; Acupuncture in Clinical Treatment; https://www.medicalacupuncture.org/For-Patients/Articles-By-Physicians-About-Acupuncture/Acupuncture-in-Cancer-Treatment

- Garcia MK, McQuade J, Haddad R, et al; Systematic Review of Acupuncture in Cancer Care; J Clin Oncol; 2013, Mar 1; 31(7); 952-960.
References

- Tseng HS, Chan SE, Kuo SJ, Chen DR; Acupuncture-Related Rapid Dermal Spread of Breast Cancer: A Rare Case; J Breast Cancer; 2011 Dec; 14(4): 340-344.

"Maybe we should write that spot down."