

ISSUE	HEALTH ISSUE	INTERNAL ORG
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r cheek creasing	Breathing disorders Compromised immune function	Lung <i>qi</i> deficie
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GENERAL ACUPUNCTURE

## Cosmetic Acupuncture: Clues to Overall Health

Shellie Goldstein, DAPM, AP, LAc

Question: I became an acupuncturist in 2015 and love it. I feel drawn to cosmetic acupuncture and would like to specialize in it. I've studied several different methods over the past few years and I'm up for more. However, my fear is that I may regret not treating more medical issues. Would you be willing to share your unique perspective on this?

Thank you for your question. I appreciate both your interest in specializing in cosmetic acupuncture and potential regret about not treating medical issues. As a cosmetic acupuncturist, patients may be drawn to you for their cosmetic complaints. However, as a practitioner of Chinese medicine practicing cosmetic acupuncture, you will treat both their cosmetic and medical concerns. Effective and lasting results for *any* condition are obtained when addressing both the superficial and the underlying cause.

### Beauty From Within

In the Western world, beauty treatments focus on topical procedures and products to improve skin turnover, increase collagen, strengthen tissue elasticity, fill in facial hollows, and lift sagging skin. In Chinese medicine, beauty is regarded as a reflection of one's internal health and therefore treatments focus on promoting systemic well-being.

The foundation of today's modern cosmetic acupuncture is based on the philosophy of ancient *Mei Rong*, the art of maintaining beauty from within. Grounded in the principles of Chinese medicine, both view a disharmony in the *Zang-Fu* organs, meridians, *qi*, blood, and fluids as the core of cosmetic-related complaints. An imbalance of any or all of these can reflect on the face in the form of wrinkles, muscle tone changes, decreased tissue elasticity, skin imperfections, and more.

The etiology of these conditions is embedded in the pattern recognition, diagnosis and treatment of *qi*, blood and fluids as they influence and are influenced by the elements, organs and meridians. Significant results reside in one's ability to diagnose and treat these underlying root causes to resolve the branch cosmetic concerns.

FACIAL ISSUE	HEALTH ISSUE	INTERNAL ORGAN IMBALANCE
Restricted muscle tone Creasing above the upper lip	Digestive disorders	Spleen <i>qi</i> deficiency
Poor skin quality Inner canthus to cheek creasing	Breathing disorders Compromised immune function	Lung <i>qi</i> deficiency
Skin pigmentation Wrinkles between the eyebrows	Headaches Menstrual disorders	Liver <i>qi</i> and blood deficiency with stagnation
Facial edema Creasing under the neck	Low back pain Fatigue	Kidney yang deficiency

As cosmetic acupuncturists, we learn that those presenting with the appearance of muscle laxity in the cheeks generally suffer from allergies, digestive, and gastrointestinal disorders. From a Chinese medicine perspective, these symptoms are a reflection of the underlying pattern referred to as spleen *qi* deficiency with dampness. Improving facial muscle tone, resolving allergies, and harmonizing digestive and gastrointestinal disorders can all be achieved when tonifying the spleen and ridding dampness.

Patients presenting with forehead wrinkles commonly suffer from headaches, menstrual problems and difficulty sleeping, related to liver blood deficiency with *qi* stagnation. Treating the underlying liver disharmony allows for softened forehead wrinkles, resolution of menstrual disorders, diminished headaches and restful sleep.

Patients who exhibit signs of premature aging frequently feel tired, chilled, and often suffer from low back pain attributed to kidney yang and essence deficiency. Fortifying the kidneys enhances overall appearance, reduces fatigue, increases internal warmth, and alleviates pain.

#### What Research Says

Research supporting the efficacy of cosmetic acupuncture is by no means limited to the face. Studies demonstrating its ability to induce a natural wound healing cascade to release growth factors and stimulate the production and deposition of collagen and elastin in the dermis;<sup>1</sup> down-regulate genes involved in muscle breakdown and up-regulate protein synthesis;<sup>2</sup> and facilitate osteoblast proliferation and differentiation by stimulating mesenchymal stem cell precursors<sup>3</sup> substantiate the benefits of acupuncture treatment for any tissue, musculoskeletal or bone degenerative disorder.

#### Clues to Overall Health

As a hologram of the body, one's physical, emotional and spiritual being is reflected on the face, and a well-educated cosmetic acupuncturist skilled in facial analysis can utilize their findings for effective pattern diagnosis and treatment differentiation. Wrinkles along the outer cantus of the eyes often reflect a "happy heart." However, as these creases travel above the ocular orbit, it is common to see one's heart *shen* become disturbed, exhibited by signs of anxiety and eventually mania.<sup>4</sup>

Vertical wrinkles through the center of the cheek can be a sign of tissue collagen disorganization or internal grief, affecting or affected by the lungs.<sup>5</sup> Creasing under the jawline can indicate occipital neck tension and/or deep-rooted fear. Red spots or marks anywhere on the face often represent heat stemming from repressed emotions trapped in their corresponding organs.<sup>6</sup>

When addressing the psychodynamic aspect of any illness harboring an underlying emotional or spiritual component, treatment results can be extraordinarily profound.

#### Cosmetic Acupuncture:

- Broadens awareness
- Promotes self-acceptance
- Helps gain awareness of one's life purpose
- Opens the door to inner healing and personal transformation

Your desire to enhance your studies is admirable and speaks to your commitment when becoming a *specialist* in the truest sense of the word. As acupuncturists, we learn that a treatment works best when the root problem is correctly identified and treated in accordance with each patient's underlying and surface symptoms. Cosmetic acupuncturists with sound Chinese Medicine education, knowledge from diverse cosmetic acupuncture modalities, and enhanced clinical specialty training, develop the skills to apply comprehensive Eastern and biomedical-based root and branch strategies to effectively treat a myriad of cosmetic conditions with concomitant medical issues.

*Author's Note:* Ask the Expert! In the months to come, I look forward to exploring with you the pearls of cosmetic acupuncture. If you would like your questions or comments addressed this column, please send them to: [info@hamptonsacupuncture.com](mailto:info@hamptonsacupuncture.com) (please put "Ask the Expert" in the subject line).

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