



ACUPUNCTURE & ACUPRESSURE

Acupressure for Health and Beauty: Outlining a Telemedicine Approach

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The coronavirus pandemic has drastically altered life as we know it, and one can only speculate what awaits us in the winter season to come. In mid-March 2020, many of us in the Chinese medicine health care field were unexpectedly forced to turn our brick-and-mortar practices into virtual telemedicine in order to assist our patients back to health. Fortunately, this transition from practitioner-performed acupuncture to telepatient-performed acupressure has the potential to be an easy and effective shift.

Many randomized clinical trials (RCTs) utilize some form of acupressure (toothpick or retractable needle) as sham treatment. RCT results demonstrate that when compared to no treatment, sham acupuncture and verum acupuncture are generally effective (approximately 50 percent and 30 percent, respectively). RCT researchers have thus concluded: "Although there may be evidence to support the efficacy of acupuncture therapy for the intended condition, the results between sham and real acupuncture are insignificant."¹



Although researcher interpretations of these results raise questions about acupuncture's purported mechanism of action, the bottom line is that both modalities, acupuncture and acupressure, obtain beneficial effects. Additionally, acupuncture and acupressure outcomes are statistically significant when compared to no treatment.

As practitioners of Chinese medicine, we know patients' primary complaints are generally myriad disharmonies. As cosmetic facial acupuncturists, we learn beauty is viewed as a balance of internal harmony reflected on the skin surface. A disharmony in the *Zang-Fu* organs, meridians, *qi*, blood, and fluids can be viewed as the core of cosmetic-related complaints. An imbalance of any or all of these can be reflected on the face in the form of wrinkles, muscle tone changes, decreased skin elasticity, skin problems, marks, a withered, pale, dry appearance, 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.

Step #1: Treat the Root Cause

In order to tailor your patient's acupressure treatment, begin by establishing their underlying pattern of disharmony. Use points on the body to treat the root cause; then add face points to address the specific facial concerns. With their finger or an instrument-assisted acupressure tool, instruct your patient to massage or apply pressure to points from the suggested list below:

Kidney / Bladder points:

- KI 11: facial swelling
- KI 13: hydrates dry skin, lightens age spots, improves withered complexion
- BL 60: lightens dark spots

Spleen / Stomach points:

- SP 4: clears acne
- SP 9: decreases eye puffiness, eye bags, facial swelling
- SP 10: lightens dark/age spots, facial discoloration, dark circles under eyes; clears acne
- ST 36: brightens dull complexion, face sagging, *qi* deficiency wrinkles, eye bags
- ST 40: reduces face swelling, edema

Lungs / Large Intestine points:

- L 1: hydrates and improves skin tissue
- L 7: improves overall appearance, reduces redness
- L 9: improves overall appearance, reduces redness
- LI 4: softens wrinkles, lightens discoloration, calms facial spasms, all facial symptoms
- LI 9, LI 10: clears heat from the skin, decreases skin redness and irritation
- LI 11: lightens facial discoloration and dark spots, soothes red and swollen eyes

Heart / Small Intestine Pericardium / Triple Heater points:

- H 7: brightens dull complexion, calms redness
- P 4: brightens dull complexion
- P 6: brightens dull complexion
- TH 5: reduces facial puffiness and congestion

Liver / Gallbladder points:

- LV 2: brightens dull complexion, hyperpigmentation
- LV 3: softens wrinkles, lightens hyperpigmentation
- GB 20: hydrates dry skin, calms sensitive skin, relaxes neck
- GB 40: softens wrinkles
- GB 41: brightens eyes
- GB 44: lifts facial sagging

Conception Vessel points:

- Ren 6: decreases facial swelling, delays aging, improves withered complexion
- Ren 4: slows aging, illuminates lusterless complexion
- Ren 12: lifts sagging muscles, lightens dark spots, reduces puffy eyes and face
- Ren 24: decreases swelling of face, softens wrinkles around the lips

Governing Vessel points:

- Du 4: improves skin color and tone, reduces facial swelling
- Du 10: releases heat from the skin layers
- Du 14: clears heat in the face, relaxes the neck, lightens dark spots
- Du 20: relaxes and lifts face tissue

Step #2: Address Any Specific Facial Concerns

Now strategically add face points from the suggested list of points below:

- *Forehead: soften forehead wrinkles:* Yin Tang, BL 2, 3, GB 13, 14, 15, ST 8
- *Eyes: lift brows; soften wrinkles:* BL 2, Yin Tang, Tai Yang, GB 14
- *Cheeks: lift and tone mid-face:* ST 3, 4, 6, 7, SI 18
- *Mouth: lift corners of mouth:* LI 19, 20, ST 4, CV 24
- *Jaw: sculpt jawline:* ST 4, 6, 7, mouth point (.5 cun lateral to CV 24)
- *Jaw points (ST 4, 5, 6 below jaw):* SI 17, TH 17
- *Neck: tone neck area:* BL 10, GB 20, 21, TH 17, SI 17, ST 13

Point Explanations

- ST 2: softens wrinkles around the eyes, eye bags, dark circles under eyes
- ST 3: softens wrinkles around the eyes, eye bags, dark circles, sagging, dull complexion, hyperpigmentation, facial discoloration
- ST 6: lifts sagging of neck and chin
- ST 7: lifts sagging neck and chin
- ST 8: softens forehead wrinkles, droopy eyelids
- SI 17: reduces facial puffiness
- SI 18: tones cheek muscles
- TH 17: reduces facial puffiness
- GB 1: softens crow's feet
- GB 14: lifts sagging eyelids, softens forehead wrinkles

Similar to *tuina*, acupressure is commonly used throughout Asian countries to treat many health conditions. Whether in-office or on-camera, acupressure is a beneficial treatment. Assisting your patient with acupressure to enhance health and beauty can be rewarding for both you and your patient. In addition to being effective, it is easy to perform, with results that have the potential to be long lasting.

Reference

1. Tan JY, et al. Sham acupressure controls used in randomized controlled trials: a systematic review and critique. *PloS One*, 2015;10(7):e0132989.

Editor's Note: Ask the Expert! If you would like your questions or comments addressed this column, please send them to: info@hamptonsacupuncture.com (put "Ask the Expert" in the subject line).

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