

Colored Light Therapy and Acupuncture

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Colored light therapy is a modality that has been on the fringe of interfacing with acupuncture.

Popularized primarily through the work of Mandel,¹ applying colored light to acupuncture points is another form of utilizing electromagnetic stimulation of acupoints to influence the flow of *qi* to re-establish balance within the body/mind. In this case, the variation of treatment outcome is determined by the frequency (color) of the light. Light interacts with matter through principles of basic science. Through the photoelectric effect, whenever light strikes a solid substance, the energy of the photon (unit of light) is transferred to the electron (matter). How much energy is transferred depends on the frequency, or color.² Within a biological system, this translates to varying response according to the color used.

I have come to conceptualize the meridians as a fiberoptic information transfer system. Light, after all, is one of the most fundamental forms of energy/matter (yin/yang). Russian research demonstrated that light is transferred through the skin, specifically through acupuncture points. The researchers were also actually able to track the light along meridian pathways for a limited distance utilizing a photo multiplier and photometric units. In addition, they found that different colors penetrated to various depths.³

Research on the transdermal penetration of light was published in Science in 1998. Campbell et al. at Cornell University demonstrated that light applied to the skin was able to influence circadian rhythms. They theorized the effect was mediated by red blood cells.⁴ However, whatever the mechanism, it is curious to consider that the location the light was transmitted was in the popliteal crease behind the knee - also the site of the major acupuncture point BL54.

Obtaining demonstrable clinical outcomes using colored light can be quickly and easily achieved. Keep in mind that we are discussing visible noncoherent light, not lasers. It is extremely safe, noninvasive and gentle, yet very powerful and effective. It stands on its own, or it can be used in conjunction with acupuncture. It is not unusual for effects to be immediate. The main stumbling block is how to choose colors.

Colors are differentiated by the warm thermal tonifying colors (red; orange; yellow; and lemon) versus the cool, electric sedating colors (turquoise; blue; indigo; and violet). Green is neutral in temperature, being in the middle of the spectrum. Three other colors commonly used that are outside the electromagnetic spectrum are purple (cool), magenta (neutral) and scarlet (warm). I rely primarily on Dinshah's research and experience in choosing individual colors. Dinshah developed a sophisticated system of color attributes based on prior work,⁵ decades of careful treatment and observation, and the theory that the attributes of an individual color would correspond with the mineral that gave off that color on spectroscopy. The attributes and sample treatments of hundreds of disorders utilizing only

colored light are easily referenced in a condensation of his work, *Let There Be Light*.⁶ Many of the color attributes dovetail nicely with five-element theory. It is to be noted that anything that can be addressed with acupuncture can be addressed with colored light.

I have developed a simple, practical method of light treatment. I rely primarily on the auricular microsystems points when I use light with acupuncture in the same treatment. This is particularly useful at balancing the autonomic nervous system, and all parts of the body are easily accessible. Colored light applied to the ear points is particularly relaxing, as it promotes the parasympathetic response. If nothing else, this relaxation state facilitates receptivity and opens a window to healing from the rest of the treatment.

I start with point zero and *shenmen* for balancing, then move on to specific areas. If I am using only light in the treatment, I also use body points. I have found light to be very valuable as an adjunct to acupuncture (and on its own). It is very effective when used locally to encourage healing of the skin, as with persistent ulcers. At times, I have added light when acupuncture alone wasn't getting the results, and it has turned things around. It is both well-received and effective in pediatric treatments. The choice of colors should be limited to one or two per treatment. Body points can be chosen according to TCM (or whatever theoretical basis the individual practitioner relies upon). One acupuncturist has found treating the *ting* point(s) corresponding with the distribution of pain to be effective.

Here is an example of treating insomnia with light. Most commonly I use violet, because it is very calming to the nervous system. The auricular protocol includes point zero; *shenmen*; insomnia I and II; tranquilizer; and the master cerebral point. Body points are *yintang*; Pericardium 6; Heart 7; and Liver 2 or 3. This protocol worked very well with a woman who had severe insomnia for two years subsequent to the sudden death of her husband.

Pain can be very effectively treated with light, either solely from the ear or in conjunction with body points. First, treat the zero, *shenmen* and thalamus points with a color chosen according to the condition: lemon if it chronic; turquoise if it is acute or the patient is anxious; magenta if the kidneys/adrenals are deficient; or green for general balancing. Then, at the local area, choose a color according to what is presenting. Usually I find the cool colors work better for pain, because it is most often local excess. However, a warm color should be considered in case of deficiency, such as in fibromyalgia. As an example, during a weekly acupuncture treatment for back pain, a 72-year old woman developed acute pain in her posterior right calf. The pain did not release with pressure as cramps normally do; in fact, it got worse. Applying gentle pressure did not help either, nor did local needles in ah shi points. Finally, I went to the ear and applied turquoise to the lower leg area using the French auricular map. Within seconds, the pain subsided and remained relieved. There is also a growing body of anecdotal evidence in the treatment of chronic pain.

Colored light therapy is a method of applying pure energy to acupuncture points for therapeutic effects. As an adjunct to acupuncture or on its own, it can add a dimension to one's practice that is unique and complementary to needle treatment.

References

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