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*Acupuncture  
Chinese Herbology  
Nutritional & Lifestyle Counseling*

## Ask the Acupuncturist

### CAN ACUPUNCTURE AND CHINESE HERBS TREAT CANCER?

*Kath,*

A friend of mine, diagnosed with colon cancer, has done both chemo and radiation but this has not contained it. The cancer has not spread to the liver or lungs yet, so there is still some hope for treatment. Do you have knowledge of herbal or Chinese medicine that might help her? It would be wonderful if you have something to recommend. I am devastated at the thought of losing this friend. **Helen Ross San Jose, California**

Dear Helen,

To answer your question, yes, we do treat patients with cancer using acupuncture and Chinese herbs. However, when treating these patients, acupuncture generally takes a supportive role to western treatment. Acupuncture and herbs can reduce the side effects of chemo and radiation, such as nausea, diarrhea and hot flashes, and increase energy. Between rounds of chemo, Chinese medicine can rebuild the body from the damage done by the radiation and drug treatments. Recently I had an exceptional case that shows how effective acupuncture and Chinese herbs can be for cancer patients.

A patient came to me with a type of cancer called a lymphoma. In fact, this was his fourth recurrence in nine years. In the past, his doctors have treated the cancer with standard methods of chemo and radiation. His doctors urged him to take an early retirement from his very busy chiropractic practice, as they felt the work stress contributed to the recurrence of the cancer. Unfortunately a few months prior to our meeting the cancer had recurred, and the doctors found that the lymph nodes were growing yet again. They decided to take a watchful waiting approach, and re-scan in six months. If the nodes continued to grow, they would begin chemo/radiation treatment.

At this point my patient called me to start a series of acupuncture treatments in order to build his body's ability to fight the cancer. I had recently taken a seminar on cancer treatment from a Chinese doctor in Florida who is getting phenomenal results in reducing the size and getting rid of tumors. We began a series of acupuncture treatments and herbal therapy that lasted three months. As part of this holistic approach, he made dietary changes, such as stopping caffeine and reducing dairy products. In April, my patient returned to his doctors for re-evaluation with a follow-up scan. He wrote to me to say,

*"Well, your treatments helped quite a bit. The latest scan shows that the nodes are almost completely gone! My oncologist was so happily surprised that he has requested information about the treatment protocols that you used. This is a huge relief to my family and me. Thanks so much for doing a great job." Sincerely,  
Don Sinclair, Chiropractic Physician*

It is considered unusual to use acupuncture and Chinese herbs as the primary treatment method for cancer, but there are a few practitioners treating cancer who are getting some startlingly effective results. In this particular case, the patient was in a waiting period. It made sense to treat the cancer with acupuncture and herbs, since it would not interfere with standard, western medical treatment.

Many people are looking for effective treatment for cancer, and other conditions that do not respond well to standard western medicine. As with any type of treatment, holistic or standard western medicine, no one can promise effective results one hundred percent of the time. Integrating Chinese medicine with western treatment can increase the effectiveness of medical care so that the patient has a better chance of overcoming difficult to treat conditions.

## AN ANCIENT PRACTICE MEETS MODERN MEDICINE

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BY PATRICIA ANSTETT

Knight Ridder Newspapers

DETROIT - (KRT) - *A Detroit team is studying acupuncture as a treatment for hot flashes caused by breast cancer treatments. It's a therapy that holds hope for other cancer-related problems.*

Chemotherapy medicines and the drug tamoxifen, taken by thousands of women to prevent a recurrence of breast cancer, cause hot flashes, often debilitating ones, in nearly two-thirds of patients, says Dr. Eleanor Walker, a radiation oncologist at Detroit's Henry Ford Health System and principal investigator of the study. "Patients are tired of taking drugs with side effects," Walker says, referring to herbal supplements, anti depressants and other medicines women take to reduce hot flashes.

A two-year study, started in October, hopes to build on a growing body of research that may help make acupuncture an option for treating other cancer-related problems. "The evidence is fairly strong for a number of indications, especially pain," caused by cancer, "but we need more randomized trials," says Barrie Cassileth, Ph.D., chief of the Integrative Medicine Service at Memorial Sloan-Kettering in New York.

Sloan-Kettering also is studying the use of acupuncture to relieve hot flashes in breast cancer patients and contrasting that approach with a fake type of acupuncture being used in a comparison group. "It seems to be pretty effective," Cassileth says. Over the last few years, the center has found acupuncture useful for cancer-related problems such as chronic fatigue, dry mouth and post-surgical pain, Cassileth says. Acupuncture also could help men who develop hot flashes as a result of prostate cancer drugs, a class of medicines known as androgen antagonists.

The Ford study, funded by a \$250,000 grant from the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, will assign 140 patients to receive either acupuncture or Effexor, one of several anti depressants found effective in reducing hot flashes, Walker says. To be eligible, women must currently be taking tamoxifen or have completed chemotherapy and have at least 14 hot flashes a week. Women receive acupuncture twice a week for two weeks, then once a week for eight weeks. Walker is collaborating on the study with Beth Kohn, an acupuncturist and alternate medicine practitioner at Ford's Center for Integrative Medicine in Novi. "We're trying to learn from each other," Walker says.

Marie Lockhart, a 44-year-old hospital accountant and mother of two from Southfield, Mich., found relief from her hot flashes by getting acupuncture through the study. She had endured eight to 12 hot flashes a day while taking tamoxifen. "I was sweating all day," she says. A routine mammogram led to her July 2003 diagnosis with an early, treatable tumor. She's midway through a five-year course of tamoxifen, the standard regimen of the drug for breast cancer patients.

Kohn inserts hair-thin needles in what are called primary points of the body, pathways to energy and the inner spirit, as Eastern medicine views them. "Acupuncture may be considered a new treatment in this culture, but it's actually a 4,000-year-old medicine," Kohn says. Acupuncture is effective in treating other problems common in women, including fibromyalgia, which causes muscle aches and body pain, menstrual problems, fertility problems, digestive disorders and smoking cessation difficulties. Kohn says she also has achieved good results relieving hot flashes related to menopause. The treatments take about 15 minutes. They are free through the study, but cost \$100 a session otherwise.

The tiny needles, inserted so gently that they don't evoke even a wince or cry from Lockhart, include several points on the hand, wrist, back, neck, shoulders, ankle, calf, abdomen and head.

"It doesn't hurt at all," Lockhart says as she reclines on her side and relaxes as if she is getting a massage. "You really can't even feel it ." Lockhart likes the head point the most. Kohn says that pressure point "is for mental clarity." After one of her treatments ended last year, Lockhart returned to her job at Mt. Clemens General Hospital. "I go to work happy, calm, focused," Lockhart says, pausing between each word as if she is taking deep breaths. No signs of stress here. Lockhart finished her acupuncture treatments in late December. Now she has only two hot flashes a day. She hopes that's all she gets. "So far, so good," she says.

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