

"The Psychologic Consequences of Chronic Dyspnea in Chronic Pulmonary Obstruction Disease: The Effects of Acupressure on Depression"

Abstract:

Objectives:

The onset of depression is often triggered by breathlessness in persons with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). It is hypothesized that these are the psychologic consequences of chronic dyspnea. Lessening dyspnea might alleviate depressive symptoms. Acupressure has been shown in other studies to produce relaxation. The aim of this study was to determine if it would lessen dyspnea and reduce depression in patients with COPD ... The true acupressure group received a program of acupressure using appropriate acupoints that promote relaxation and relieve dyspnea. The sham acupressure group received acupressure using sham acupoints different from the meridians and ganglionic sections of the true acupressure group. Both acupressure programs lasted 4 weeks, with five

sessions per week that lasted 16 minutes per session.

Results:

The results of this study showed that the GDS scores, DVAS scores, oxygen saturation, and physiological indicators of the true acupressure group were significantly improved, compared to those of the sham acupressure group.

Conclusions:

These findings provide health professionals with an evidence-based intervention to use with persons with COPD. Applying this acupressure program in clinical practice, communities, and long-term care units may lessen chronic dyspnea and depression in persons with COPD.

Introduction:

In 2003, 126,000 people died from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which ranks as the fourth-leading cause of death in the United States.¹ In Taiwan, COPD was the eleventh-leading cause of mortality in 2004.² It was projected that COPD would be the world's fifth-ranking cause of burden of disease by 2020.³ COPD is

characterized by a slowly progressive irreversible airflow limitation caused by chronic bronchitis, or emphysema with related symptoms, such as exertion dyspnea, chronic cough, expectoration, and wheezing.⁴ Most COPD patients have been found to meet the diagnostic criteria for dysthymia, characterized by a chronic depression or irritable mood for at least 2 years.⁵ In a previous report, Yohannes et al. indicated that 42% of the 137 subjects with COPD in their study were identified as being clinically depressed.⁶ In Taiwan, Tsai reported that the prevalence of depressive symptoms was 40% among 230 COPD outpatients.⁷ Depressive symptoms are so common in COPD patients that it is often accepted as a manifestation of the disease and rarely assessed or treated as an addressable condition...

Acupressure, a type of massage, uses the acupuncture principles of Chinese medicine. It is a noninvasive therapy that stimulates meridians or points by means of pressure, usually using the hands or fingers to regulate life energy, called qi (che²) in Chinese.¹⁵ According to the experience of clinical

acupuncturists, the dyspnea found in COPD patients is related to depletion of fluids and qi, Lung qi vacuity, and then qi failing to govern this, or insufficiency of the Kidney origin, essence vacuity, insecurity of the root, and then qi failing to ensure containment.¹⁶ The acupoints related to the Lungs, Large Intestine, Spleen, and Bladder channels, and the controlling and Governing Vessels, were often selected to relieve dyspnea...For this reason, a subject- and data collector-blinded, randomized, block experimental design was conducted for this study to test the effects of acupressure in reducing depressive symptoms in breathless patients with COPD

Materials and Methods:

A randomized, block experimental design was used for this study. The subjects and the data collector were blinded to the intervention assignments throughout the study. The true acupressure group received an acupressure program that used the acupoints of Great Hammer, Celestial Chimney, Lung Transport, Kidney Transport, and Fish Border— all of which have been shown to improve

dyspnea. The sham acupoints used were Shang Hill, Supreme White, and Large Pile. Both acupressure treatments extended over 4 weeks and consisted of 16-minute sessions given five times a week (20 sessions). Both acupressure protocols were done by the investigator during the same period to avoid differences in administration...

Discussion:

Sixty-three-point-six percent (63.6%; 28/44) of COPD subjects had an indication of depression. The prevalence of depression in this study exceeded the 42% of elderly COPD outpatients found in a study in America⁶ and the 40% mixed COPD outpatients in a Taiwan study by Tsai... y put on antidepressive medications during the study. Being unable to

breathe is a very frightening experience. Patients with COPD complicated by chronic hypoxemia also complained of a disabling breathlessness and reduced exercise capacity, as well as depression.^{8,32,33} The acupressure program led to decreases in dyspnea, with subjects feeling less breathless and thus better able to carry out their daily activities. The fear subjects had of being unable to breathe was decreased, and this may have contributed to the decrease in depression. Our findings confirmed that acupressure, using true acupoints, resulted in decreased depression through decreased dyspnea, suggesting the positive mediational role of dyspnea reduction through acupressure...

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