

Letter to the Editor

Acupuncture for Postoperative of Plastic Surgery

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In recent years, plastic surgery has been gaining prominence and its techniques presenting important improvements. With the increasing number of plastic surgeries and the proliferation of information about them, we also noticed that is necessary to offer these patients in new ways to experience the postoperative time. Since plastic surgery affects many other fields, it gathers different professionals in a multidisciplinary team in other to achieve better results.

At first, I received patients who had undergone plastic surgery. They presented complaints related to the surgery after a long period of time, such as: persistent water retention by hormonal disarray, continuous pain months after surgery, some unexplained disturbances with different sensitivity and difficult to treat with drugs. Noting that acupuncture was actually helping to solve these problems, we started to develop a protocol for early treatment. We come to start treatment from the second day after surgery.

From 2001 to 2006, I received about 300 patients of Dr. Alcemar Maia Souto (plastic surgeon for 20 years) that were subjected to acupuncture following this new protocol. Some words of this doctor can help us understand some of the results achieved: ‘Acupuncture is an important control treatment to the patient cure, generating higher benefits when compared to traditional drug therapy that use anti-inflammatory and analgesic.’ He said acupuncture helped solve many problems resulting from postoperative ‘in an outstanding way without using drugs.’

Indeed, the success achieved from this partnership led us to disseminate the results obtained aiming to assist professionals involved in these procedures in order to diversify and broaden their scope of practice. Despite the opinion of a large number of experts according to which different paradigms can’t coexist harmoniously, we believe that knowledge should always go hand in hand. Different paradigms can complement and help each other, generating excellent results, such as this one that we observed in our clinical practice.

What is Acupuncture for Postoperative?

The growing concern about postoperative care is bringing positive results through preventive means to avoid complications. These initiatives bring a shorter postoperative time and, consequently, a more satisfactory result.

One of those preventive means is Acupuncture for postoperative

time which, although not yet widespread, has been proven to be an extremely effective method, producing excellent results, not only in accelerating postoperative, as well as the prevention and control of common complications of this type of intervention.

Treatment with Acupuncture aims to offer a more tolerable, faster and better postoperative to patients. And its effects can be much more effective the sooner it starts. Acting in the immediately postoperative time, acupuncture can prevent complications generated in late postoperative time, preventing problems difficult to solve with drugs.

Why should we do acupuncture in postoperative time?

Even in cases of a simple procedure, it traumatizes the body. Swellings, bruises of different levels, discomfort and pain are some of the most frequent complaints with which patients have to live during the postoperative period. The overall healing process is long, painful and sometimes also brings with it some not very pleasant surprises such as fibrosis, persistent pain, sleep disorders, poor digestion and overall energy disharmony. Also, a procedure such as the face surgery generally stays patients off social contact for about one month.

As we know, acupuncture as a resource developed by Traditional Chinese Medicine seeks to restore the natural strength of the body which may have been shaken by several reasons. Any surgery is seen as a trauma from the perspective of Chinese Medicine and the choice of the means to reestablish such homeostasis, i.e., choosing the most appropriate mix of points and the resources to be used will be under choice of each expert.

Acupuncture brings general body rebalancing and organic ways of self-regulation to patients, thus helping the body to overcome the surgical trauma. In other words, it is possible to achieve organic homeostasis in a natural way, unlike what occurs with the ingestion of chemical medication.

Thanks to the numerous benefits of acupuncture, we’re not working so late anymore and time to the initiation of treatment by acupuncture was reduced to 1 day after discharge from a surgical procedure, whatever it is.

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Action in body

In general, accelerate post-surgical means to achieve the following objectives:

1. Bruises reduction
2. Edemas reduction
3. Pain reduction
4. Accelerate healing with improved quality of it
5. Avoid fibrosis formation
6. Lymphatic drainage
7. Emotional rebalancing
8. Restoration of organic homeostasis
9. Acting on disorders caused by surgery as constipation, sleep disturbance, anxiety etc.

Preventive treatment can prevent problems such as:

1. Bruising
2. Infection
3. Injury innervation
4. Suture dehiscence

Areas of Practice

Postoperative cosmetic surgery has very different characteristics for each type of procedure. Thus, the type of surgery will determine



Figure 1: Acupuncture aims to promote organic homeostasis, releasing energy blockages, toning deficiencies and sedating excesses in meridians.

the way of action. Roughly speaking, we can say that facial surgery (rhinoplasty, blepharoplasty, facelift or rhytidectomy) needs a local and distal treatment and surgeries in body (abdomen surgeries such as liposuction, liposculpture, plastic abdomen) need distal interventions. In the latter case, we should avoid the discomfort of the patient in removing the abdominal brace used after surgery, which does not diminish the result, therefore, let us recall a major premise of acupuncture that says, in acute cases the distal points are more important than locations (Figure 1).

The local action of acupuncture aims mainly dissipate ecchymosis (Xue stagnation), and edema (Ye Jin stagnation), decrease pain symptoms (stagnation of Qi and Xue), and accelerate the healing of injured tissue, returning peripheral sensitivity.

Treatment

In postoperative of several patients I have seen renal energy down with frequent complaints of pain in lumbar region coupled to an energy reduction of Spleen-Pancreas (Pi) with gastro-intestinal disturbances. However, often I observed an energy disharmony in the Five Elements with symptoms such as sleep disturbance (Heart - Xin), throbbing headaches (Liver - Gan), back pain (Rim - Shen), digestive disorders (Spleen - Pi) and edema (Lung - Fei). See below the table of the most frequent complaints and their treatment:

Face

Type of Needles: TING needles (1,5 cm) Time of Application: During about 20 minutes Body Type of Needles: Korean needles with 3 cm Time of Application: During about 20 minutes (Figure 2) (Table 1).



Figure 2: Points for Organic Homeostasis: IG4; BP6; E36

Symptoms / Western signs	Energy Syndromes	Therapeutic Goals
Edemas	Qi Pi deficiency Qi Shen deficiency Qi Fei deficiency	Drain liquid
Bruises (surgical trauma)	Qi/Xue stagnation	Release stagnation
Pain	Local stagnation/sist Dqi and Xue	Release stagnation
Psychic disturbance (anxiety)	Yin of Xin deficiency Changes in Shen (mind)	Tone Yin of Xin and calm down the mind
Inomnia	Yin deficiency or Xue of Xin	Calm down Shen Tone Yin of Xin
Stomach neuralgia	Heat in Wei	Sedate Wei
Constipation	Qi of Pi deficiency (thin stools) or stagnation of Qi of Gan (ball stools)	Tone Pi Release stagnation Local points
Distal Points: IG4; E36; BP6; BP9; R3; R7; BP3; C7 and CS6		

Table 1: Treatment Methodology

Some surgeries



Figure 3: Surgery



Figure 4: Surgery



Figure 5: Surgery



Figure 6: Surgery



Figure 7: Surgery



Figure 8: Surgery

Partnership results

After the period of 5 years starting in April 2001, 400 face and body surgeries and interventions were observed and treated, with at *Medicina Intern*, 2016

least 60% of reduction in postoperative time. We also highlight:

1. The acupuncture acceptance rate by patients was enormous since very few rejected the technique for fear of needles.

2. Many of them remain in treatment after recovery from surgery to control various types of disorders such as PMS, migraine headaches, labyrinthitis and others.

3. From the medical point of view, there is no doubt – we improve the quality of postoperative period.

4. Time reduction was the best point observed: before a procedure could take about 30 days for the full recovery of the patient, this can now be accomplished in 15 days.

5. Improved quality of healing

6. More effective reduction of edema

7. Faster disappearance of bruises

8. Adjustment of sleep

Physical and psychological effects

1. Improved quality of healing

2. More effective reduction of edema

3. Faster disappearance of bruises

4. Adjustment of sleep

We all know that aging is an inexorable process. However, this reality is experienced in different ways in various societies, throughout space and time. Our relationship with aging can be seen, ultimately, as the way we see and how we deal with death, and in this sense, this can be understood as the result of beliefs and values of a society. Therefore, aging is seen so differently by Oriental cultures in general than by our Western culture. The intervention in this natural process, likewise, has manifested in various ways, modified by both scientific and technological advancement, and by new demands arising in recent centuries, especially in the twentieth century. It is interesting to realize that cosmetic acupuncture is an ancient practice that dates

back to the Chinese empresses, and now today, meets the pressing needs of self-esteem of modern man.

My clinical practice and professional experience focused on cosmetic treatment have made this perception even clearer, because I have had the opportunity to combine, using acupuncture treatment, two paradigms from both cultures: the culture of Western cosmetic interventions, in which what counts most is a faster type of intervention; and the other one, the Eastern cosmetic intervention, whose natural treatment methods seek greater harmony with the body that is undergoing treatment. Looking to work in a multi-disciplinary way in the matter of cosmetic interventions during these years, my technique has settled upon a solid foundation provided by Traditional Chinese Medicine. I chose the middle path. The natural process of aging can be alleviated and treated with greater patient health and happiness through the energy balance promoted by acupuncture and its associated practices. The benefits of acupuncture treatment can help in the recovery of those who undergo the most radical interventions in the body, such as plastic surgery.

During clinical practice I have noticed that, on the one hand, the change of body image may cause an improved self-esteem, and that, on the other hand, an internal balance can be reflected outwardly, bringing the beauty from the inside out - the opposite can also occur. Significant internal changes may be provided by changing the body shape. It is noteworthy that there was something in common in all patients; low self-esteem was what led them to seek cosmetic interventions to change their bodies. So keep in mind the objectives of our work. There is a need for change in behavioral habits, and we need to intervene as mediators in the rehabilitation of the patient whether it is psychological, nutritional, breathing etc. If we don't seek to understand who the patient is, little advance will be reached intervening in his body, and we can do little to make him have more health, happiness and balance. The patient should be aware of this and walk together with us holding hands throughout his treatment.