

## **Gag reflex control through acupuncture: a case series.**

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Abstract

### **BACKGROUND:**

Many patients avoid dental appointments because of severe gagging when they have work performed, such as taking impressions. There are several methods known to alleviate gagging, and some studies have suggested that acupuncture may be effective in reducing gag reflex. The aim of the present study therefore was to evaluate whether acupuncture can produce a reduction of the gag reflex.

### **METHODS:**

A total of 20 patients, aged between 19 and 80 years, with history of gag reflex on taking dental impressions, were recruited. All patients fulfilling the inclusion criteria had an upper and lower dental alginate impression taken without acupuncture, and a second upper and lower alginate impression taken immediately after acupuncture based on traditional Chinese medicine. After each impression, the patients recorded their emetic sensation using a visual analogue scale (VAS).

### **RESULTS:**

The results showed a significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) reduction in the gag reflex scores after acupuncture. For upper impressions, they fell from 6.8 (1.1) to 1.1 (1.1); and for lower impressions, from 5.45 (1.0) to 0.4 (0.7) (mean (SD)).

### **CONCLUSIONS:**

The findings from our study suggest that acupuncture may be useful for preventing and treating gag reflex, and justifies further study.

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