

Acupuncture Benefits Sleep, Reduces Stress

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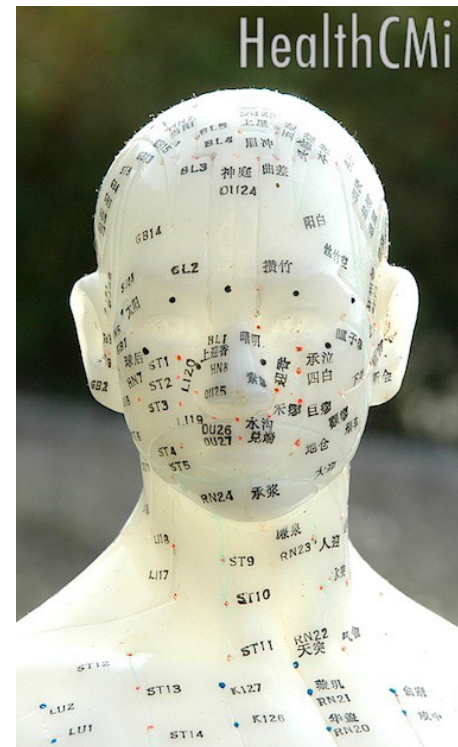
Acupuncture successfully improves sleep quality and reduces both stress and depression in the elderly. Published in *Neuroscience Letters*, researchers made this determination based on a randomized, placebo-controlled study. The researchers note that “the rigorous methodology employed in this study ensured the reliability of the results concerning the improved sleep quality and relaxation effects involved with acupuncture during aging.”

Acupuncture significantly improved the Pittsburg sleep quality index (PSQI) scores, indicating substantial sleep quality improvements. In addition, beck depression inventory (BDI) and the perceived stress scale (PSS) measures demonstrated significant clinical improvements. True acupuncture demonstrated significant positive patient outcomes for improvements in sleep quality and reduction of both depression and stress. The researchers note, “No significant changes were observed in the placebo group.” The researchers add that the strict controls employed during the study “demonstrate the real effects of acupuncture.”

Acupuncture was applied to elderly patients in a hospital outpatient setting. Licensed acupuncturists applied the acupuncture needles while patients rested in a supine position on a stretcher. Acupuncture was applied at a rate of twice per week for a total of 25 minutes of needle retention time per treatment session. Each patient received a grand total of 10 acupuncture treatments. Sterile disposable acupuncture needles were applied to acupuncture points:

- SP6 (Sanyinjiao)
- LI4 (Hegu)
- ST36 (Zusanli)
- LV3 (Taichong)
- PC6 (Neiguan)
- Ex-NH3 (Yintang)

Manual needle stimulation was applied to the needles frequently during each acupuncture treatment session. For the placebo-controlled sham acupuncture group, acupuncture needles were applied to areas of the body not associated with classic acupuncture points as defined by Traditional Chinese



Medicine (TCM). In addition, the placebo-controlled group's needles were applied to a superficial depth without needle stimulation.

The acupuncture point prescription choice was similar to a prescription in a related study. The researchers note that Sun et al. used acupuncture points including ST36, SP6, PC6, and LV3 in an investigation of acupuncture's effects on major depressive disorder (MDD). The researchers note that Sun et al. "found similar antidepressant effects of electroacupuncture (EA) as compared to fluoxetine-treated patients." Fluoxetine is a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) antidepressant medication. It is also known by its trade names including Prozac and Sarafem.

The researchers add that electroacupuncture "had a faster onset of action, better response rate, and better improvement rate than fluoxetine, indicating that acupuncture can be a good intervention method for ameliorating psychological distress and depressive symptoms, thereby promoting relaxation and well-being." Although there were similarities to Sun et al., the sleep researchers employed manual acupuncture stimulation whereas Sun et al. employed electroacupuncture. This contrast demonstrates that both electroacupuncture and manual acupuncture have therapeutic value in the treatment of depression.

The researchers note that additional studies are required to investigate the effects of acupuncture on the process of immunosenescence, the process of immune system deterioration due to aging.

They cite research demonstrating that "adequate sleep helps fight infection and improves immunity after vaccinations" and "increased sleep duration was associated with increased number of circulating immune cells." The current study demonstrates that acupuncture benefits sleep in the elderly. This suggests potential benefits to overall immune system function. As a result, the researchers call for studies to investigate the impact of acupuncture on immunity in the elderly.



References:

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- See more at: <http://www.healthcmi.com/Acupuncture-Continuing-Education-News/1439-acupuncture-benefits-sleep-reduces-stress#sthash.0K8bu78h.dpuf>