
AI translation · View original & related papers at
chinaxiv.org/items/chinaxiv-202305.00111

Auricular Acupressure Combined with Meridian Acupoint Massage for Insomnia in a Cervical Cancer Patient: A Nursing Case Report Post-print

Authors: Zhang Zhonghua, Liu Shuhong

Date: 2023-05-12T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

Objective: To evaluate the clinical nursing efficacy of a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) specialty nursing technique—auricular acupressure combined with meridian acupoint massage—in a cervical cancer patient with heart-spleen deficiency pattern.

Methods: On August 5, 2022, one cervical cancer patient with heart-spleen deficiency pattern and insomnia was admitted. Based on the fundamental theories of TCM and according to the principles outlined in “肿瘤绿色调护技术” (Tumor Green Nursing and Regulation Techniques), the patient was treated with auricular acupressure combined with meridian acupoint massage therapy, and received both conventional nursing care and TCM specialty nursing care. Clinical nursing efficacy and PSQI (Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index) and AIS (Athens Insomnia Scale) scores were compared before and after treatment.

Results: After treatment, the patient’s clinical insomnia symptoms improved, and both PSQI and AIS scores were lower than pretreatment levels.

Conclusion: The use of auricular acupressure combined with meridian acupoint massage therapy can effectively relieve insomnia symptoms, improve sleep quality, enhance clinical treatment and nursing efficacy, and warrants clinical application.

Full Text

Nursing Report on the Treatment of Insomnia in a Cervical Cancer Patient with Auricular Acupoint Pressing and Meridian Massage

ZHANG Zhonghua, LIU Shuhong

Department of Oncology, Dongfang Hospital, Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, Beijing

Abstract

Objective: To summarize the clinical nursing effects of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) characteristic nursing techniques—auricular acupoint pressing combined with meridian massage—in a cervical cancer patient with heart-spleen deficiency pattern.

Methods: In August 2021, a cervical cancer patient with heart-spleen deficiency and insomnia was admitted to our department. Guided by fundamental TCM theory, the patient received auricular acupoint pressing combined with meridian massage therapy according to the *Green Regulation Technology for Tumors*, alongside routine nursing care and TCM characteristic nursing interventions. Clinical nursing outcomes and PSQI and AIS scores were compared before and after treatment.

Results: Following treatment, the patient's clinical insomnia symptoms improved, with both PSQI and AIS scores decreasing compared to pre-treatment levels.

Conclusion: The combination of auricular acupoint pressing and meridian massage can effectively alleviate insomnia symptoms, improve sleep quality, and enhance clinical treatment and nursing outcomes, warranting broader clinical application.

Keywords: cervical cancer; insomnia; auricular acupoint pressing; meridian massage; TCM characteristic nursing techniques

Introduction

Cervical cancer is a common malignant tumor of the reproductive system with high incidence, representing a major threat to women's health [1]. Beyond surgical intervention, patients often require chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Under the combined assault of physical disease, psychological stress, and treatment side effects, cervical cancer patients frequently develop comorbid insomnia [2]. Insomnia not only severely reduces quality of life but may also promote tumor recurrence, metastasis, and deterioration, thereby diminishing treatment efficacy

[3]. Consequently, improving sleep disturbances holds significant importance for enhancing both quality of life and prognosis in cervical cancer patients.

Auricular acupoint pressing regulates visceral and endocrine functions through stimulation of ear acupoints, offering advantages of holistic regulation, notable efficacy, simple operation, and absence of adverse reactions [4]. Meridian massage for insomnia employs various manipulations to stimulate specific acupoints or body regions, transmitting effects through meridians to the viscera and producing activating effects [5]. The combination of these two modalities regulates visceral yin-yang imbalance to restore equilibrium and tranquilize the mind. This report details the therapeutic outcomes in one cervical cancer patient with insomnia.

Clinical Data

Patient Luo, female, 52 years old, diagnosed with cervical malignancy. The patient had not undergone surgery but received multiple cycles of chemotherapy with albumin-bound paclitaxel plus lobaplatin/cisplatin. She was admitted on August 15, 2021. Admission symptoms included: clear consciousness, heavy-headedness, fatigue, poor appetite, and sleep disturbance (difficulty falling asleep before 11 PM, waking at 3 AM, difficulty returning to sleep), yellow urine, and difficult bowel movements. Tongue presentation: dark tongue with white greasy coating; pulse: thin and weak. TCM diagnosis: Accumulation disease (heart-spleen deficiency with phlegm-stasis intermingling pattern); Western medicine diagnosis: cervical malignancy, insomnia.

Nursing Care

Daily Living Care: Provide a quiet, comfortable ward environment; instruct the patient to develop healthy living and sleep habits; emphasize warmth preservation and avoidance of wind-cold exposure.

Dietary Care: Recommend foods that tonify qi and blood while calming the spirit, such as millet, pumpkin, carrot, Chinese yam, and longan fruit. Avoid raw, cold, bitter, spicy, and heat-inducing foods. Encourage small, frequent meals.

Exercise Care: Engage in appropriate physical labor and exercise within the patient's capacity, avoiding strenuous activity. Recommend traditional practices such as Baduanjin and Tai Chi.

Emotional Care: Guide the patient to relax emotionally and avoid excessive rumination. Recommend listening to light music to promote relaxation.

TCM Characteristic Nursing

The treatment protocol comprised two components administered by nurses according to physician orders: auricular acupoint pressing therapy and meridian massage, performed every other day for approximately 30 minutes per session. During treatment, the patient also listened to liver-soothing music in jue mode, such as “Jiangnan Hao” and “Chunfeng Deyi” [6], to enhance insomnia improvement and quality of life.

Auricular Acupoint Pressing Therapy [7]: The practitioner first massages the patient’s auricle to generate warmth, then disinfects the local ear skin with 75% alcohol. Based on pattern differentiation, primary acupoints selected were: Heart (for neurasthenia, insomnia), Subcortex (for neurasthenia), Shenmen (for neurasthenia, insomnia, dream-disturbed sleep), and Sympathetic (for autonomic dysfunction). Adjunct points included Liver, Kidney, Spleen, and Gallbladder to activate visceral functions. Vaccaria seeds were typically affixed to adhesive tape and applied to ear acupoints with firm pressure to produce sensations of soreness, numbness, distension, or warmth. Patients were instructed to press each point 3-5 times daily for 1-2 minutes per session, applying pressure to tolerance until warmth was felt [8].

Meridian Massage [9]: With the patient supine, the practitioner stands at the head of the bed to perform facial and head massage while guiding whole-body relaxation through abdominal breathing. Each manipulation is performed at 120-160 strokes/minute in cycles lasting 20 minutes.

Massage Procedure:

- 1. Opening Heaven’s Gate (Pushing Cuanzhu):** Both thumbs alternately push directly from the glabella (Yintang) to Baihui, passing through: glabella, heavenly heart, celestial eagle, fontanelle, Meichong, forehead, and Baihui. Duration: 2 minutes.
- 2. Pushing Kan Palace:** Both hands use the thenar eminence and thumbs to press along the eyebrows in a horizontal line, pushing toward Taiyang acupoint. Duration: 2 minutes.
- 3. Kneading Taiyang:** Using a “butterfly flying” technique, knead Taiyang acupoint with thumbs for 2 minutes.
- 4. Kneading Baihui:** Press Baihui acupoint with the thumb for 2 minutes.
- 5. Hooking Fengchi and Pressing Anmian:** Press from Fengchi to Anmian acupoint with the tip of the middle finger for 2 minutes.
- 6. Hooking Lianquan:** Both middle fingers press from Anmian through Lianquan under the jaw for 2 minutes.
- 7. Pressing Chengjiang:** Hold the chin with index finger while pressing Chengjiang acupoint with thumb for 2 minutes.

Effect Evaluation

On August 15, 2021 (admission), the patient appeared listless with difficulty falling asleep, virtually no sleep at night, and inability to return to sleep after waking. PSQI score was 18 points and AIS score was 15 points, indicating

severe sleep deficiency. After treatment with auricular acupoint pressing combined with head meridian massage on August 22, PSQI score decreased to 12 points and AIS score to 10 points. The patient's mental state improved slightly, reporting reduced insomnia with frequent nighttime awakenings but ability to fall back asleep. On August 29, PSQI score further decreased to 8 points and AIS score to 6 points. The patient reported mild fatigue, going to bed at 10 PM, waking at 6 AM, with 1-2 nighttime awakenings but generally stable sleep—demonstrating clear therapeutic effect .

Discussion

Insomnia is a common chronic psychiatric condition characterized by insufficient sleep quality, quantity, and depth [10], corresponding to TCM categories of “sleeplessness,” “inability to sleep,” “inability to lie down,” and “non-closing eyes” [11]. Among pathogenic factors, heart-spleen deficiency is the most common pattern [12]. In this case, excessive rumination injured the spleen, impairing qi transformation and blood generation. Insufficient blood failed to nourish the heart vessel, resulting in spirit deprivation and insomnia—most closely related to heart-spleen dysfunction. Traditional Chinese medicine understands sleep-wake physiology through holistic concepts and the philosophical principle of unity between heaven and humanity, with sleep intimately related to yin-yang, qi-blood, and nutritive-defensive qi. The essence of TCM insomnia treatment is pattern differentiation and treatment. Compared with conventional Western medicine, TCM therapies such as auricular acupoint pressing and meridian massage demonstrate superior efficacy with fewer side effects [13]. Therefore, TCM insomnia treatment primarily employs the four diagnostic methods—inspection, auscultation-olfaction, inquiry, and palpation—combined with overall patient condition, tongue, coating, and pulse to differentiate patterns, regulate visceral function, and restore qi-blood yin-yang balance and emotional harmony, addressing the root cause while manifesting fundamental TCM concepts of holism and pattern-based treatment.

Auricular acupoint pressing was selected because the six yang meridians connect directly with the internal and external aspects of the ear, while the six yin meridians connect indirectly. Based on pattern differentiation, primary acupoints included: Heart (for neurasthenia, insomnia), Subcortex (for neurasthenia), Shenmen (for neurasthenia, insomnia, dream-disturbed sleep), and Sympathetic (for autonomic dysfunction). Adjunct points—Liver, Kidney, Spleen, and Gallbladder—were selected to activate visceral functions. Stimulating ear acupoints regulates related visceral meridian functions, promotes blood circulation, and harmonizes viscera and yin-yang to achieve peaceful sleep.

Numerous meridian massage manipulations exist for insomnia, commonly including kneading, grasping, pinching, palm pushing, and one-finger meditation techniques. This case primarily employed kneading methods on head acupoints.

Treatment acupoints were selected based on their meridian affiliations, indications, and functional localization of sleep centers in the cerebral cortex. The Governor Vessel, as the “sea of yang vessels,” governs the marrow and connects to the brain, regulating qi-blood of all yang meridians. Therefore, Baihui and Yintang on the Governor Vessel were selected, combined with Sishencong (an extraordinary point on the vertex) that connects to the brain and regulates whole-body yang qi. Manual kneading techniques were then applied to unblock head collaterals. The combined use of these acupoints helps coordinate yin-yang, harmonize qi-blood, and achieve tranquilizing and spirit-calming effects.

Through application of these TCM characteristic nursing techniques, this patient’s insomnia symptoms improved, demonstrating the advantages of good efficacy, rapid effect, and simple operation. However, the intervention period in this case was relatively short. Future work should include more extensive research to further validate the scientific reliability of this method.

References

- [1] Yao WJ, Cong AH. Application evaluation of auricular seed embedding combined with sleep patches in insomnia nursing for cervical cancer patients[J]. *China Foreign Medical Treatment*, 2020.
- [2] Deng XQ, Liang H, Lin HY, et al. Clinical investigation of insomnia characteristics and quality of life impact in malignant tumor patients[J]. *World Journal of Sleep Medicine*, 2020.
- [3] Wang JD, Cai Q, Dong JP. Clinical observation of acupuncture combined with massage in treating insomnia[J]. *Chinese Journal of Traditional Medical Science and Technology*, 2020.
- [4] Shi XD, Lu XG, Zhao M, et al. Clinical study on Lu’s acupuncture combined with Zhu’s one-finger meditation massage for insomnia[J]. *Chinese Manipulation & Rehabilitation Medicine*, 2020.
- [5] Zhao HJ. Efficacy observation and nursing experience of auricular acupoint pressing for insomnia patients[J]. *Family Medicine*, 2020.
- [6] Zhang XL, Yang HX, Li XB, et al. Theoretical discussion on “Yang-guiding acupoint massage” for insomnia under yin-yang theory guidance[J]. *Journal of Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine*, 2020.
- [7] Zhao HJ. Efficacy observation and nursing experience of auricular acupoint pressing for insomnia patients[J]. *Family Medicine*, 2020.
- [8] Li MS, Liu RB. Effects of yang-guiding massage combined with breathing guidance on sleep quality in cancer patients with insomnia[J]. *Nursing and Rehabilitation*, 2020.
- [9] Liu XC. Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI)[J]. *Chinese Mental Health Journal*, 1996, (Supplement): 375-378.
- [10] Luo N, Xu JY, Xu XX, et al. Application effect of repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation combined with acupoint application in prostate cancer patients with insomnia[J]. *Medical Equipment*, 2020.

- [11] Insomnia TCM Clinical Practice Guideline Research Group, China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences. Insomnia TCM Clinical Practice Guideline (WHO/WPO)[J]. *World Journal of Sleep Medicine*, 2020.
- [12] Zhong XC, Zheng M. Clinical research progress of acupoint application in treating insomnia[J]. *Jilin Journal of Chinese Medicine*, 2020.
- [13] Li X, Ma SL, Yang LX, et al. Efficacy observation of midnight-noon ebb-flow auricular acupoint pressing combined with acupoint massage for heart-spleen deficiency insomnia[J]. *Journal of Shanxi University of Chinese Medicine*, 2020.
- [14] Li XJ, Shi N. Clinical study of Zaoren Ningshen Capsule in treating insomnia of spleen deficiency with liver depression and heart spirit malnourishment pattern[J]. *Chinese Journal of Integrative Medicine on Cardio-Cerebrovascular Disease*, 2020.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.