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## A Case Report on the Treatment of Melasma with Holographic Gua Sha Technique

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### Abstract

This article summarizes the nursing experience of a case of melasma treated with holographic gua sha therapy. The patient had suffered from melasma for eight years with poor response to Western medical treatment. Based primarily on Traditional Chinese Medicine emotional care and dietary nursing, Traditional Chinese Medicine holographic gua sha therapy was administered, and before-and-after comparison demonstrated effective improvement of melasma.

### Full Text

### Preamble

### Nursing Experience in Treating Melasma with Holographic Gua Sha Therapy: A Case Report

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### Abstract

This article summarizes the nursing experience of treating one case of melasma with holographic gua sha therapy. The patient had suffered from melasma for eight years with poor response to Western medical treatment. Based primarily on TCM emotional and dietary nursing care, the patient received TCM holographic gua sha therapy. Comparison before and after treatment demonstrated effective improvement of melasma.

**Keywords:** Holographic gua sha; Melasma; Facial gua sha

## Introduction

Melasma is a skin disease caused by various factors, characterized by abnormal pigmentation metabolism on the face [1]. It predominantly appears on the face, though sometimes on the upper limbs, presenting as light brown or dark brown pigmented patches of varying sizes and often distributed symmetrically [2]. The predilection sites include the zygomatic prominence, supraorbital arch, periorbital area, and nose. The pigmented areas show no inflammation, scaling, or subjective symptoms. The disease course is prolonged, worsening in summer and improving in winter, with color depth varying according to sun exposure, endocrine changes, rest, and psychological factors [3].

Melasma frequently occurs in young and middle-aged women. While easy to diagnose, it is difficult to treat, manifesting primarily as symmetrical brown or dark brown pigmented patches on the face [4]. TCM pattern differentiation for melasma mainly includes qi stagnation and blood stasis type, liver qi stagnation type, and spleen-stomach weakness type [5], with qi stagnation and blood stasis patterns comprising a relatively large proportion [6]. Due to its close relationship with qi and blood, qi stagnation often leads to impeded blood flow, which can develop into stasis. Therefore, qi stagnation and blood stasis are key pathogenic factors in melasma. Treatment modalities include acupuncture, acupoint thread embedding, auricular point pressing, and acupoint plaster application. However, these often suffer from slow efficacy, suboptimal effects when used alone, and some are invasive treatments that cause discomfort or may lead to allergic reactions after drug contact with the skin [7]. In comparison, facial gua sha therapy is more readily accepted by patients in clinical practice and is increasingly applied in melasma treatment [8]. Facial gua sha opens the facial interstices, guides pathogenic factors outward, dredges meridians, and promotes qi and blood circulation to improve complexion and eliminate patches [9]. Our department has employed TCM holographic gua sha technology in clinical application for melasma treatment, achieving favorable therapeutic outcomes. This article reports the nursing experience of one case treated with holographic gua sha therapy.

## Case Report

The patient was a 55-year-old female who visited our hospital's dermatology and venereology department on May 24, 2022, and subsequently received TCM external treatment at the TCM Green Nursing Clinic. Chief complaint: Eight-year history of facial melasma causing feelings of inferiority, with recent emotional irritability due to poor treatment outcomes. Present illness: Multiple scattered melasma patches on the zygoma. Past medical history: Generally healthy. Denied food or drug allergies.

Physical examination: Temperature 36.2°C, pulse 62 beats/min, respiration 18

breaths/min, blood pressure 130/70 mmHg. Tongue: red with thin white coating. Pulse: wiry and slippery. Diet: normal. Bowel and urine: normal. Sleep: restless. TCM diagnosis: Liver patches. Pattern differentiation: Qi stagnation and blood stasis with liver qi stagnation. Western medicine diagnosis: Melasma. The patient received TCM holographic gua sha treatment once weekly. After one course of seven interventions, the patient's melasma area significantly decreased and emotions stabilized. The patient currently reports normal appetite and sleep, normal bowel and urine, pale red tongue with thin white coating, and wiry slippery pulse.

## Nursing Assessment

### Pattern Differentiation and Treatment Principle

The patient had facial melasma for eight years with multiple scattered patches on the zygoma, which corresponds to the liver and gallbladder meridians. Treatment should focus on soothing the liver, regulating qi, and activating blood to resolve stasis.

### Psychological Status Assessment

The Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (SAS) was used for psychological assessment, with a standard cutoff score of 50; higher scores indicate greater severity. The patient's pre-treatment score was 24 points.

## Nursing Plan

### Therapeutic Approach

Holographic gua sha therapy was employed with the treatment principle of soothing the liver, regulating qi, and activating blood to resolve stasis, aiming to improve symptoms and leverage the advantages of TCM external treatment modalities.

### Enhanced Daily Nursing Care

Daily nursing care was strengthened through three aspects: lifestyle management, dietary nursing, and emotional nursing.

## Nursing Interventions

### Holographic Gua Sha Therapy

1. **Scraping the forehead region:** The forehead is divided by the anterior midline, with each side scraped from medial to lateral, covering the skin between the anterior hairline and eyebrows. The technique passes through Yintang (EX-HN3), Cuanzhu (BL2), Yuyao (EX-HN4), Yangbai (GB14), Sizhukong (TE23) to Tongziliao (GB1).

2. **Scraping the liver-gallbladder region of the nose.**
3. **Scraping the cheek region:** Scrape the first and second cheek zones respectively from medial to lateral. The first cheek zone passes through Chengqi (ST1) to Juliao (ST3), Yingxiang (LI20) to Ermen (TE21), and Tinggong (SI19). The second cheek zone passes through Chengqi (ST1), Sibai (ST2), Quanliao (SI18), upper limb zone, Xiaguan (ST7), Tinggong (SI19), Tinghui (GB2), and Ermen (TE21).
4. **Scraping the mandibular region:** Using Chengjiang (CV24) as the center, scrape from medial to lateral, passing through Chengjiang (CV24), Dicang (ST4), Daying (ST5) to Jiache (ST6).
5. **Locating and pressing positive reaction points beneath melasma patches [10].**

### Routine Nursing Care

1. **Lifestyle management:** Maintain a positive mood, exercise appropriately to increase blood circulation and promote metabolism to eliminate toxins; ensure adequate daily sleep, avoid staying up late, limit computer and mobile phone use to reduce skin radiation; select appropriate skincare products and pay attention to daily sun protection.
2. **Dietary nursing:** Reduce consumption of spicy, greasy, and irritating foods such as chili peppers, hot pot, fatty meat, and fried dough sticks; avoid alcohol and tobacco; consume more vitamin-rich vegetables and fruits such as spinach and apples.
3. **Emotional nursing:** Due to the prolonged course of melasma and extended treatment duration, patients' self-perception and social interaction abilities are affected, easily generating negative emotions. Patients are advised to maintain a peaceful mindset and positive emotions; family members should pay attention to the patient's psychological state, encourage expression of feelings, and provide targeted psychological counseling through conversation and communication to help patients view their condition correctly.

### Nursing Evaluation

Based on comparative observation before and after treatment, facial gua sha therapy demonstrated significant improvement in melasma [Figure 1: see original paper].

### Results and Follow-up

The patient demonstrated good compliance, tolerated the pain associated with TCM holographic gua sha therapy, experienced no adverse reactions, and was very satisfied with the treatment results. A telephone follow-up on July 20, 2022

revealed no increase in facial pigmentation area or deepening of color. A second telephone follow-up on September 26, 2022 found that after prolonged sun exposure, facial pigmentation would temporarily deepen but return to normal after one day.

## Discussion

The formation of melasma is closely related to dysfunction of three organs: liver failing to regulate, spleen failing to transport, and kidney failing to store essence. Furthermore, as stated in the *Classic of Difficulties*: “When vessels are obstructed, blood cannot flow; when blood cannot flow, complexion loses its luster, thus the face becomes dark and sallow, indicating blood death.” This disease belongs to the TCM categories of “liver patches” and “dark black patches.” Historical medical literature contains numerous descriptions of melasma, such as the theory of blood stasis and qi obstruction, suggesting that melasma is an external manifestation of overall functional imbalance caused by seven emotional injuries, overexertion, and other factors leading to liver qi stagnation and subsequent blood stasis obstructing the collaterals, preventing qi and blood from nourishing the face.

Modern research also indicates significant differences in hemorheology among melasma patients [11]. Therefore, during treatment, besides regulating the functions of the lung, spleen, and kidney, it is necessary to address blood stasis to eliminate patches. Facial gua sha therapy effectively stimulates meridians and acupoints through manual techniques, causing slight redness of facial skin to open interstices, guide pathogenic factors outward, and relax meridians. Practice has proven that gua sha can improve skin microcirculation, increase local skin blood flow, and dilate skin microvessels [12]. In summary, facial gua sha therapy is an effective treatment modality for melasma worthy of further research and widespread clinical application.

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