

# ASHLAND ACUPUNCTURE



*Suzanne E. Sky, L.Ac., MTOM*  
1605 Siskiyou Blvd. Ashland, OR 97520  
ph 541.488.9696 fax 541.552.9684  
[www.ashlandacu.com](http://www.ashlandacu.com)

## Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Cancer

The first known medical text to describe cancer is the *Nei Jing*, a classic of traditional Chinese medicine written approximately 2,500 years ago. In describing uterine cancer, the *Nei Jing* says that among other causes, it can result "when the body cannot adjust to environmental changes of cold and hot." The resulting imbalance causes the body's Qi (energy) to stagnate and coagulate, eventually forming an actual physical lump.

Breast cancer is first described in the *Zhu Bing Yuan Hou Lun*, attributed to Yuan Fang Chao (581-618 AD). A breast mass is described as "a tiny lump that stays in the breast. The mass is not too hard and not too big. It is shaped like a small, irregularly-formed stone." A further explanation comes from the *Dan Qi Xin Fa*, written by the renowned Chinese physician Dr. Dan Qi Zhu. Chinese clinicians regarded internal emotional causes of disease in the same way they considered external or pathogenic factors. Dr. Dan Qi Zhu states that breast cancer can result when a woman is not happy; the anger, worry and depression she experiences gather until they cause a disorder of her digestive system (in Chinese medicine, this would relate to a deficiency of Spleen Qi) and a stagnation of the Qi of her Liver. These imbalances can cause a small lump to form in her breast, which after many years may change shape to become like a rock with many small holes, a condition TCM refers to as *yan*, meaning cancer. (1)

(Source: *Traditional Chinese Medicine World* Vol. V, No. 3 Fall 2003 p 5)

### **Twofold Cause of Disease**

The cause of any disease in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is basically divided into two main causes:

- 1) **Exogenous:** External pathogens due to wind, heat, damp, dryness, fire and summer heat. Factors such as diet, lifestyle, environment and chemical factors are considered here.
- 2) **Endogenous:** Internal causes due to emotional imbalances arising from excess or inappropriate anger, worry, joy, anxiety, grief, fear and shock.  
Usually, this is the underlying cause which weakens the system and makes it susceptible to external factors.

If they are allowed to progress, these two main causes will proceed deeper into the body and become more complex causing such conditions as accumulation of Damp, Heat, Cold or Phlegm (toxins) in the internal organs; systemic imbalance of Yin and Yang, deficiency or stagnation of the body's Qi and Blood, disharmonies and imbalance of the internal energetic and organ systems.

### **Identification of Pattern and Treatment**

The Chinese practitioner then first identifies the pattern of imbalance that underlays the disease and symptoms to determine the causative factors that need to be harmonized to support the healing process. This means discerning whether a condition is due to Heat or Cold, Dryness or Damp, what combination of Excess, Deficiency and Stagnation are present and a host of other factors to consider. Once the pattern is discerned this leads the practitioner to which points and herbs will be most helpful. Then, the response of the patient determines whether this diagnosis needs to be further refined. As the patient progresses, the practitioner continues to determine the treatment most effective to restore a pattern of harmony to the system. This allows TCM trained practitioners to both identify and treat systemic, energetic imbalances in a precise way and to refine their treatment as the client progresses according to the patient's response.

In the perspective of Chinese medicine, when cancer occurs, all of the body's five major organ systems become drastically imbalanced, making cancer difficult – but not impossible – to treat. The role of the TCM physician is to provide the patient with the opportunity to heal, to change the energy imbalances and to reestablish inner harmony.

Being wholistic in approach, the basic principles of Chinese medical treatment include:

- 1) It is **essential to treat the person, as an individual**, rather than the disease, first. Five people with the same Western medical diagnosis, might each require a very different treatment. This is due to their genetics, environment, personality, physical condition, lifestyle, age, and many other factors. This is considered as identifying and treating a pattern.
- 2) It is **necessary to treat the root cause**, not just the symptoms, and to prevent the imbalance from going deeper.
- 3) It is **necessary to support the body's natural healing systems** – the body has the ability to heal itself.
- 4) It is **essential to restore balance and the harmonious functioning of all the organs working together**.

### **The role of Acupuncture in Cancer Treatment**

The degree of effectiveness of treatment depends on various factors including patient's overall health at time of initial encounter, clinical staging of the cancer, presenting symptoms and vitality of the person. Without a doubt, in any case, acupuncture can be helpful in the care of a client facing the cancer challenge to improve overall well-being and quality of life.

#### **Acupuncture has been found to be helpful to**

- Support energy during chemotherapy and radiation.
- Support well-being and quality of life during chemotherapy and radiation.
- Decrease nausea and vomiting from chemotherapy and radiation. (2)
- Decrease side-effects during chemotherapy and radiation.
- Help speed recovery from surgery with treatments pre- and post-surgery.
- Help decrease post-operative pain. (2)
- Aid and hasten recovery from the side effects of the various therapies. (2)

#### **Herbs and nutritional compounds can help:**

- Support energy, well-being and quality of life during chemotherapy and radiation.
- Support digestion during chemotherapy and radiation.
- Decrease nausea and vomiting from chemotherapy and radiation.
- Calm inflammation.
- Support healing after surgery.
- Help decrease the amount and duration of pain meds required.

### **Nausea and Vomiting**

At the University of Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Medicine, a well-controlled study completed over two years ago, the authors of the published paper reported significant reduction of nausea and vomiting when treated with acupuncture. It is now routinely administered before, after and in between chemotherapy treatment sessions for control or nausea and emesis. (2)

### **Pain Control**

That acupuncture is a powerful tool for general pain control is widely known. Less known is its successful use in some cancer-related pain and in reducing narcotic use and thereby minimizing the side effects of confusion, disturbed mentation, behavioral changes, nausea and severe constipation. (2) Chinese herbal formulations, correctly chosen, can also help decrease the need for pain medications – allowing patients to remain on a stabilized dose (not have to keep increasing the dose) and support their overall energy. These herbal formulations do not interfere with medical procedures or medicines.

## **Re-balancing Energy and The role of Acupuncture in Cancer Treatment**

In the paradigm of Chinese medicine, any chronic disease or cancer process is both due to depleted or stagnant energy in the system and also depletes the energy level of the organism. Pain, in particular, is both debilitating and drains a persons energy steadily over time.

Acupuncture, herbs and nutritional compounds are used to help support the body's energy systems, replenish depleted energy reserves, rebalance energy flow, calm inflammation, support the healing process and thereby aid a person's sense of well-being.

(1) (Source: *Traditional Chinese Medicine World* Vol. V, No. 3 Fall 2003 p 5)

(2) **Acupuncture in Cancer Treatment.** Eugene Mak, MD, Board Certified Oncologist and MARF Board Member. Date Published: 04-06-2006 on acufinder.com

(3) **Acupuncture For Refractory Cases Of Chemotherapy-Induced Nausea And Vomiting.** Maria del C. Guerra, MD *Medical Acupuncture: A Journal For Physicians By Physicians.* Vol 16, #1

**Design, Setting, and Patients** Eight patients presented to the author's practice (in 1998-1999) for acupuncture treatment. Each of the patients had experienced nausea and vomiting as the result of at least 1 course of chemotherapy.

**Intervention** Acupuncture needling at PC 6, ST 43, GV 20, and CV 12; ST 36 was used if this point was tender. Patients also received antiemetic pharmacotherapy as they had prior to the acupuncture treatment.

**Main Outcome Measure** Cessation of chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting.

**Results** Seven of the 8 patients responded to the addition of acupuncture to control nausea and vomiting. These patients generally were able to tolerate additional courses of chemotherapy.

(4) **Cancer and Traditional Chinese Medicine** *Treating the Side Effects of Chemotherapy and Radiation with Traditional Chinese Herbs.* Amy K. Hanks. 2000 Eastland Press