

Treating the Side Effects of Chemotherapy with Constitutional Facial Acupuncture

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Introduction

Outpatient clinics in hospitals and cancer centers have been successfully treating patients for the side effects of chemotherapy with facial acupuncture. These treatments address toxicity, help to improve the functioning of the immune system, and also alleviate symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, vertigo, and neuropathies that are caused by chemotherapy treatments.

Facial protocols treat the attendant gaunt, sunken look that is associated with the wasting of cancer and the toxicity of chemotherapy treatments, particularly in the area of the cheeks. Needling the face with acu-muscle points brings Qi and blood to the face and plumps out the cheeks by means of a positive microtrauma. It also hydrates and moistens the skin and reduces stress and facial tension.

The use of endorphin points in the face lifts the spirits and enhances self-esteem. The patient not only looks better, but also feels calmer and more grounded. Psychospiritual treatments address fear, promote a more positive, hopeful outlook, boost the patient's will to live, and foster the development of the courage necessary to endure this difficult time.

The combination of these nurturing treatments and the compassion provided by the practitioner is life-affirming.

The recommended protocols and suggested points in this article should be performed at the practitioner's discretion. All or some of the points may be used for each syndrome; however, the decision regarding which approach to use is entirely dependent upon your patient's needs at the time of the treatment.

Constitutional Treatments

Use 38 gauge or 40 gauge needles, and do not manipulate them. If the patient is very sensitive or emotional, needle shallowly. As in Japanese acupuncture treatments, insert several needles in the area of tenderness, tightness, or where there is skin discoloration.

Toxic Side Effects

To alleviate toxic side effects, treat the patient 24 hours after each round of chemotherapy. Needle bilaterally unless otherwise indicated. Below are some of the suggested points:

ST 36 Zusanli (Leg Three Li)

- ♦ He-Sea Earth Point; lower He-Sea point
- ♦ Sea of Nourishment
- ♦ Horary point of the Stomach (Earth on Earth)

ST 36 is an immune system tonic, strengthens the *Wei* Qi, and tonifies the body's Qi and blood. It also helps with vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, and low energy, and it grounds the patient.

This Sea of Nourishment point provides the patient with the strength to persevere during this challenging health crisis. According to the Chinese, ST 36 is a longevity point.

PC 6 Neiguan (Inner Gate)

- ♦ Luo Connecting point
- ♦ Master point of *Yin Wei Mai*

PC 6 harmonizes the Stomach when used with Ren 12 (*Zhongwan*). It strengthens *Wei* Qi, clears heat and fever, stops pain, and treats insomnia, vomiting, nausea, and palpitations.

Psychospiritually, it balances the Heart and mind when there is fear, anxiety, and depression.

Du 14 Dazhu (Great Hammer)

- ♦ Crossing point of the Six Yang meridians

This point clears internal and external heat, and regulates *Ying* nutritive Qi and *Wei* defensive Qi. It tonifies the Yang Qi, is good for yin deficient fevers, and supports the immune system.

Psychospiritually, it calms the *Shen* and treats insomnia. It revitalizes and re-stimulates the Qi of the body/mind.

BL 23 Shenshu (Kidney Shu)

BL 23 nourishes and tonifies Kidney essence, Kidney Yin, and Kidney Yang Qi. It addresses poor memory, fatigue, diarrhea, lower back and knee pain, and asthma.

I recommend a Vietnamese treatment for Kidney Yang deficiency and warming the *Mingmen*. This treatment is especially good for adrenal exhaustion, strengthening the will power (*Zhi*), and mental strength.

Treatment:**BL 23 Shenshu (Kidney Shu)****BL 52 Zhishi (Will Chamber)**

Extra Point: Essence Palace; 4 points, with 2 points on either side of the spine. One point is located ½ cun lateral to BL 52, and the other point is ½ cun inferior to that point.

This unconventional Vietnamese treatment uses liquid moxa on the needled area of the lower back and a hair dryer to heat the lower back until the patient feels comfortably warm. Pole moxa and thread moxa can also be used around the points, if the hair dryer is not an option for the patient.

BL 21 Weishu (Stomach Shu)

BL 21 regulates, calms, and tonifies Stomach Qi, resolves damp, and alleviates nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and pain in the chest and hypochondriac region.

LI 4 Hegu (Union Valley)

LI 4 regulates *Wei Qi* and perspiration, both spontaneous sweating (Qi deficiency) and night sweats (Yin deficiency). It moves Qi, stops pain, and calms the patient.

The Four Gates: Combining LI 4 *Hegu* (Union Valley) with LIV 3 *Taichong* (Great Surge) promotes the free flow of Liver Qi. This treatment calms and relieves pain, treats rebellious Qi, headache, body aches, red eyes and depression, vertigo, stress, and facial symptoms, such as facial paralysis. *Hegu* is the “Great Eliminator” and removes toxins from the body and mind.

To Improve the Immune System

Treat 1-2 Hours Before Chemotherapy:

Du 14 Dazhu (Great Hammer) is good for the immune system because it is the meeting point of the Six Yang meridians and tonifies Yang Qi (see Toxic Side Effects)

BL 17 Geshu (Diaphragm Shu)

This influential blood point tonifies, invigorates, and moves blood. It removes obstructions from the diaphragm and chest, and it calms the Stomach, as in belching, hiccoughs, dizziness, palpitations, poor memory, dry eyes, etc. It clears heat, treats insomnia, and calms the Shen.

SP 10 Xuehai (Sea of Blood)

SP 10 cools, moves blood stasis, tonifies the blood and Spleen, and benefits the skin. New blood cannot be generated to nourish the body if blood stagnation is not transformed. SP 10 is one of the acupuncture points that can directly address the blood level.

LI 11 Quichi (Pool at the Bend)

This *He-Sea*, tonification, and Ghost point clears heat, expels wind, and resolves damp and phlegm affecting the 3 *Jiaos*. It clears heat in the Urinary Bladder and treats diarrhea and painful neuropathies manifesting as wind in the muscles and joints.

When used with ST 36 *Zusanli* (See Toxic Side Effects), it tonifies the immune system and strengthens the *Wei Qi*. As one of Sun-Si-Miao's thirteen Ghost points, *Quichi* treats “internal devils” such as epilepsy, depression, and anxiety.

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Nausea and Vomiting

Treat 1-2 Hours Before Chemotherapy:

Ren 12 Zhongwan (Central Venter)

Add Ren 12, the Stomach *Mu* and the Influential point of the Yang organs, to PC 6 (*Neiguan*), ST 36 (*Zusanli*), BL 17 (*Geshu*), LI 11 (*Quichi*), and LI 4 (*Hegu*) for digestive issues. *Zhongwan* tonifies the Stomach and Spleen, treats deficient, empty, cold patterns, resolves damp, and regulates rebellious Stomach Qi, as in nausea, vomiting, and acid reflux.

Used with ST 36 (*Zusanli*), Ren 12 strengthens the Stomach and Spleen and digestion. With PC 6 (*Neiguan*), it descends rebellious Qi, opens the chest and diaphragm, and treats psychospiritual issues such as depression, anxiety, and insomnia. It is a good point for centering and balancing, and helps the patient cope with the challenge of this illness.

Vertigo and Dizziness

Extra point M-HN-1 Sishencong (Four Alert Spirit)

Sishencong calms *Shen*, subdues interior wind, and treats headache, vertigo, poor memory, insomnia, dizziness, epilepsy, issues of mental clarity, seizures, mania, and neurasthenia.

Du 20 Baihui (Hundred Meetings)

Du 20 brings clear Yang up to the head, benefits the brain, tonifies Yang, subdues Yang, and eliminates wind, with symptoms such as dizziness, tinnitus, headache, stroke, insomnia, coma, and mental states such as windstroke, epilepsy, and Parkinson's disease.

- ♦ Psychospiritually, it calms the mood and lifts the spirits
- ♦ Clears the mind, quiets the *Shen*, and treats mental disorders such as mania and depression

SP 6 Sanyinjiao (Three Yin Intersection)

SP 6 is the crossing point of Kidney, Liver, and Spleen; therefore it treats all three of the yin organs and their accompanying symptoms. It resolves damp and tonifies Stomach, Spleen, and Kidney, promotes the free flow of Liver Qi, tonifies yin and blood, moves and cools blood, stops pain, calms *Shen*, and treats insomnia. Psychospiritually, it is indicated for nervous depression, fear, and desperation.

Ren 12 Zhongwan (see Nausea and Vomiting)

LU 7 Lieque (Broken Sequence)

LU 7, the Luo Connecting point of the *Ren Mai* and command point of the head and face, treats headache, dizziness, neck issues and local pain, cough, sore throat, and facial paralysis.

Psychospiritually, it addresses survival issues – grief and sadness – and clears the patient of toxic experiences.

Peripheral Neuropathies

A peripheral neuropathy is the result of damage to the peripheral nervous system which transmits information to the brain, spinal cord, and the other parts of the body. In most cases, it is secondary to conditions such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and chemotherapy treatments.

The symptoms include numbness, tingling, prickly sensations, sensitivity to touch, burning pain, muscle weakness, and atrophy of the feet and legs, in particular. The symptoms usually worsen at night. As a preventative measure, start treating patients at the beginning of chemotherapy or one month into the treatments.

Both *Baxie* and *Bafeng* relax the sinews, treat wind and damp, increase circulation by invigorating blood, and expel toxins from chemotherapy.

- ◆ **Extra point**, *M-UE-22, Baxie* (Eight Pathogens) treats numbness, stiffness, swelling, spasms, and pain in the hands and fingers.
- ◆ **Extra point**, *M-LE-8, Bafeng* (Eight Winds) addresses swollen, painful feet with numbness and prickly, burning sensations.

Other recommended points include SJ 5 *Waiguan* (Outer Gate), LI 11 *Quichi* (Pool at the Bend), ST 40 *Fenglong* (Abundant Bulge), ST 36 *Zusanli* (Leg Three Li), LIV 3 *Taichong* (Great Surge), and LI 4 *Hegu* (Union Valley).

Foot massage, reflexology, and soaking the feet in water and Chinese herbal granules is also helpful for neuropathies.

Chinese Herbal Foot Soak Treatment

Combine the following Chinese herbal granules, and add the mixture to a foot bath filled with warm water. You can also custom blend Chinese soaking herbs for your patient:

- ◆ *Ru Xiang, Gummi olibanum* (Frankincense) invigorates the channels, relaxes the sinews, and treats pain from wind damp obstructions, reduces swelling, and generates flesh.
- ◆ *Mo Yao, Myrrha* (Myrrh) works well in tandem with *Ru Xiang* to dispel blood stasis, alleviate pain, and reduce swelling due to trauma and toxins.
- ◆ *Gui Zhi, Ramulus Cinnamomi Cassiae* (Cinnamon twig) warms the meridians and disperses cold, wind, and damp in the exterior, which causes painful joints and limbs. It moves blood, stops spasms, and relaxes muscles and sinews.
- ◆ *Rou Gui, Cortex Cinnamomi Cassiae* (Cinnamon bark) disperses deep cold, warms the meridians, unblocks channels and vessels, and alleviates painful limbs.

A foot massage with frankincense and cinnamon essential oils, mixed in a 1.5% solution with jojoba carrier oil, is also helpful for cold, painful limbs. I would recommend both soaking the feet in the Chinese herbal granules at night, and massaging the feet with the Frankincense and cinnamon oil blend during the day.

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Psychospiritual Points: The 3 “Shens”

The three *Shen* points in the head and scalp help calm the spirit, treat dizziness, poor memory, depression, anxiety, and insomnia. I have included three potent essential oils to be used with these points for a more effective treatment.

Make sure that your patient is not allergic to these essential oils or that using them does not trigger nausea, among other symptoms. I usually needle the points first, then apply the essential oils with a Q-tip or cotton bud.

If your patient is sensitive to needles and does not have a reaction to the essential oils, apply them to the scalp without needling. You can also use only needles, or combine the two approaches.

Point	Action	Essential Oil
Du 24, <i>Shenting</i> “Spirit Palace” (Court)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Calms the <i>Shen</i> ♦ Clears head ♦ Brightens eyes 	Valerian (<i>Ou Xie Cao, Valeriana officinalis</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Insomnia ♦ Despair ♦ Depression
GB 13, <i>Benshen</i> “Root of Spirit”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Calms spirit ♦ Clears the brain ♦ Supports will power ♦ Insomnia 	Galbanum (<i>Ai Wei ferula, Ferula galbaniflua</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Grounds the patient ♦ Calms mood swings ♦ Eases tension
EX-HN-1, <i>Sishencong</i> “Alert Spirit”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Calms <i>Shen</i> ♦ Aids memory ♦ Treats depression ♦ Treats vertigo 	Frankincense (<i>Ru Xiang, Boswellia Carterii</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Aids self-esteem ♦ Calms the mind and over-thinking ♦ Protects the patient from negativity

Needling Techniques:

1. 36 gauge, 30/40 mm stainless steel needle; needle Du 24 and GB 13 horizontally toward the back of the head
2. Needle *Sishencong*'s 4 points angled at 90 degrees toward Du 20 (*Baihui*)

The Facial Treatment¹

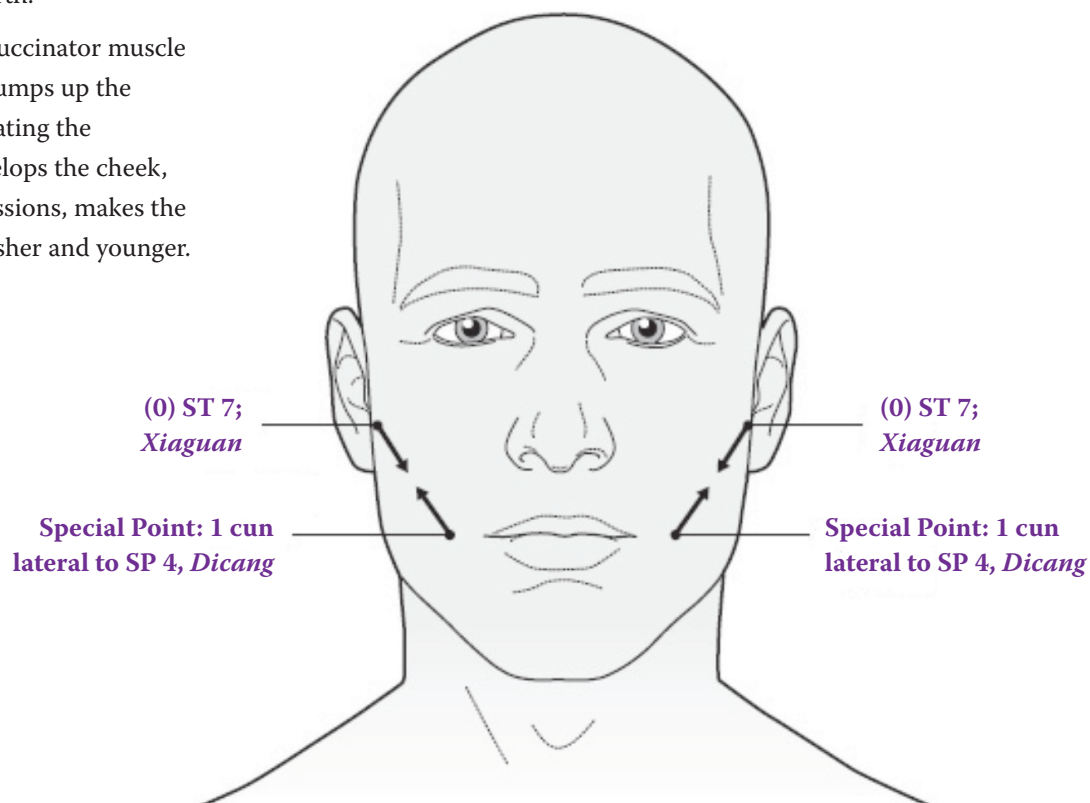
This protocol addresses sunken cheeks that are a result of cancer and cumulative chemotherapy treatments. The buccinator muscle compresses the cheeks and expels air between the lips as in blowing a trumpet. The buccinator is also an important muscle in mastication. It holds food in the mouth while chewing, or, if out of balance or untuned, allows food to fall out of the mouth. This syndrome is often seen in elderly people who have dentures, or people who have had considerable dental work.

Lines and wrinkles: The wrinkle can manifest as a vertical line starting at ST 5 *Daying* (Great Reception), and extending up the cheek area. This wrinkle is often seen in smokers because of constitutional Lung heat and dryness.

¹ This section and the accompanying graphics and photo excerpted from *Constitutional Facial Acupuncture* (Elsevier, 2014).

However, the most common complaint is hollow, sunken cheeks that make the patient look gaunt and unwell. Sunken cheeks may be caused by: waning hormones, which cause the collagen/elastin layer of the skin to lose thickness and tonicity; dental work; pulled teeth; dentures; eating disorders such as anorexia, commonly seen in undernourished fashion models, chronically ill people with AIDS or cancer, and *Jing*-deficient mothers after a difficult childbirth.

When the buccinator muscle is needled, it plumps up the cheek area. Treating the buccinator develops the cheek, and, in a few sessions, makes the patient look fresher and younger.



Buccinator:	Compresses the cheeks, expels air between the lips, as in blowing a trumpet, and aids in mastication (chewing)
Emotions:	Disdain, affection, love or self-loathing, chronic illness, dental work, aging, eating disorders
Origin:	Junction of the maxilla and mandible at the level of the molar teeth
Insertion:	Muscle fibers at the angle of the mouth that blend with the <i>orbicularis oris</i>
Needling:	30 mm; 38 or 36 gauge (Japanese #2 or #3), 0.3-0.5 cun

Needling Sunken Cheeks



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Conclusion:

A recent study commissioned by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA)² reports the endemic misdiagnosis and overtreatment of cancer by the orthodox medical establishment in the United States. The report states that “a number of premalignant conditions, such as ductal carcinoma in situ (breast cancer) and high-grade prostatic intraepithelial neoplasia (prostate cancer) should no longer be called ‘cancer.’”³ The authors of the report state that these conditions are benign and may never become health problems.

Researchers at UCLA’s Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center recently found that “radiotherapy radiation wavelengths transform breast cancer cells into highly malignant cancer stem cell-like cells with 30 times higher malignancy post treatment.”⁴

My sister recently survived a diagnosis of breast cancer, and after many invasive treatments – mastectomy, chemotherapy, radiation, and breast reconstruction – the associated neuropathies, and other side effects of the treatments, still linger. Since her physician originally misdiagnosed her, it makes me wonder ...

The fear instilled in the general public by the medical profession about cancer causes the average patient to regard this diagnosis as a potential death sentence. Therefore, they feel that they have no alternative other than to pursue the suggested aggressive treatment strategies.

No one has all the answers, but it is essential for patients to realize that they do have choices; they can consult an oncologist, but also pursue options that are more holistic, i.e., acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, among other modalities. These therapeutic strategies empower patients who are confronting this situation, allowing them to feel less helpless and more resilient.

Facial acupuncture boosts self-esteem by making patients look and feel better about themselves, and, anchored by a constitutional approach, can ease the psychological and physical burdens of patients who are wrestling with this potentially life-threatening disease. ♦

² Results of the study reported at <http://alignlife.com/articles/toxicity/millions-falsely-treated-for-cancer-says-national-cancer-institute-report>. Report available (via subscription) at <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/journal.aspx>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.