

# The Effectiveness of Acupuncture for the Treatment of Acute Herpes Zoster

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### **[ Abstract: Background and Objective]**

Our clinic has been operating for over 30 years. The outcomes of many of our treatments have demonstrated that acupuncture can prevent many diseases and is also able to dramatically reduce pain within 4 days for many patients if the treatment course begins right after the onset of symptoms. We have seen that acupuncture is able to eliminate eczema in its early stages. However, we do not see many academic papers that describe the effectiveness of acupuncture for treating acute herpes zoster.

The following case study is an example of the effectiveness of acupuncture for treating herpes zoster and related pain.

## **[Patient]**

34 years old, female, has a research position at a university research facility

## **[Life history]**

During the daytime she is in an air conditioned room which is between 26-28 degrees in the summer. She works shift hours, usually alternating sleep from midnight to 10am with sleep from 2am to 7am.

She drinks alcohol a couple times a week. She drinks about 2L of water per day.

She urinates 7-8 times each day.

In the days leading up to the onset of her condition she was dealing with a lot of stress for a few days.

### **[Chief complaint]**

Eczema, pain and itchiness on her face (right side and forehead) as well as difficulty opening the right eye

### **[1st visit ]**

Main symptom onset : September 10th 2017

First visit to a dermatologist : September 11th 2017

First acupuncture treatment : September 13th 2017

### **[Medical diagnosis by dermatologist]**

Trigeminal nerve 1-branch region herpes zoster

### **[Laboratory findings]**

Blood pressure 98/62

Abdominal signs included pressure pain in right hypochondrium and right flank. There was tightness in the centre area (Ren12 to Ren8 area).

Pulsation in the groin area on both sides. Tongue was purple.

### **[Current medical history]**

She was experiencing headaches and stabbing pain in the face in the beginning of September, 2017. She was also experiencing gastrointestinal symptoms such as GERD, indigestion and loose stools, as well as difficulty sleeping, heaviness of whole body and a stiff right shoulder.

The herpes zoster symptoms appeared on September 10th. The next day she saw a dermatologist and received the medical diagnosis, along with the prescription for antiviral drugs and analgesics which she took four times a day.

She found the website for our Clinic and read our description for acupuncture treatments for herpes zoster. She came to the Clinic on September 13 and began her treatment course.

### **[Method of treatment]**

Acupuncture and moxibustion treatment on the back, lower limbs, upper limbs, abdomen and head. Cupping was also applied to the abdomen and back to treat stagnation of blood.

She had a total of nine treatments over a span of 35 days.

Initially we treated her every day for the first four days. After that, we treated her about once a week.

### **[Treatment points]**

BL18, BL23, BL20, BL15, BL13, Kid9, Liv4, Kid7, Lu6, Du20, Liv6

### **[Progress]**

Acupuncture and moxibustion treatments were applied to the back, limbs, abdomen and head. Point selection was based on various diagnostic methods including abdominal and pulse diagnosis. She was given cupping a total of five times.

September 13<sup>th</sup>(the 1<sup>rd</sup> visits)



September 14<sup>th</sup>(the 2<sup>rd</sup> visits)





September 15<sup>th</sup>(the 3<sup>rd</sup> visits)



## **[Discussion]**

Tanabe Seikei and other practitioners treated 41 patients for herpes zoster located on the trunk. They report that 13 (32%) of these cases were acute, meaning that patients began their acupuncture treatment course within two months of the onset of symptoms. Pain was reduced by at least 80% after a course of acupuncture treatments in 9 of the cases (69% of the total). The remaining four patients also reported a reduction in pain.

Patients who began acupuncture treatments within two months of the onset of symptoms were given an average of 4.9 treatments, while those who came more than two months after the onset of symptoms were treated an average of 7.5 times.

From this one can conclude that patients who came sooner after the onset of symptoms received the most therapeutic benefit and required fewer treatments. It appears, however, that very few patients in this study began

their course of acupuncture treatments very quickly (within days) following the onset of symptoms.

In the case described above, the treatment course began just three days after onset. Because the patient came to the Clinic so soon after onset, we were able to bring about a decrease in pain by the fourth visit and eliminate the pain by the sixth visit. The affected area was in the face in this case, but there was still a high therapeutic effect from the acupuncture treatments.

In future cases it will be important to consider the kind of tools that are used in treatments and their different effects depending on the parts of the body that are affected.

The main Western medical treatments for herpes zoster include antiviral medicine and intravenous drip. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are also used to control pain. Some of these drugs have side effect (such as causing renal disorders), so medical doctors need to be careful when deciding on the dosage.

One of the advantages of acupuncture treatment is that there are few or no side effect from treatment. We can treat patients who have decreased internal organs functioning and who are not able to tolerate the prescription medication. With acupuncture treatments it is possible to reduce both the physical and mental burden that patients carry as a result of their conditions.

## **[Conclusion]**

This case study demonstrates that acupuncture is an effective treatment for pain and eczema resulting from acute herpes zoster. This case also demonstrates that acupuncture can be an effective treatment in emergency acute situations.

In Japan, we introduced modern medicine at the end of the Edo period. As a result the national medical system was changed from acupuncture and kampo to medical treatment based on modern medicine. The acupuncture approach that is common today in Japan is adapted to this modern medical environment.

Japanese acupuncture can treat many diseases, even some that modern medicine cannot treat at all. Acupuncture treatments can be of benefit in emergency situations if the proper tools and techniques are selected. Emergency medical care is an important benefit that acupuncture can provide in Japan.

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