

ACUPRESSURE AND ACUPUNCTURE: AN EVIDENCE BASED CASE STUDY TO ALLEVIATE STRESS**Dr. T. Jothimani*****S. Deepak Kumar*******Assistant Professor ** Final Year PG student**, Department of Psychology,

PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore-14.

ABSTRACT

Stress is a common problem faced by people of all ages, irrespective of age and gender. The present era can even be renamed as "Stress era", as everyone experiences stress in one way or other in their daily life. Recent researches focusing on various strategies and looking forward for an effective method to deal with daily stresses. Acupuncture and Acupressure is one such method that has a significant effect in dealing the physical and mental effects of stress. Forty years old female suffering from chronic stress related somatic symptoms is treated with acupressure point no. 8, 28 & 29 which is discussed in depth in this case study.

Key Words: Stress, Acupuncture, Acupressure point no. 8, 28, 29, Case Study.

INTRODUCTION

Acupuncture and Acupressure

Acupuncture is an oldest method of healing illness that uses very small needles inserting at various body parts. It has its origin in India, popularized in China, now it has been followed across all parts of world (Mohandass, 2001). Acupressure is an extension of acupuncture; where the healer applies pressure by using his/her thumb in various body parts of patient. Both are comes under Contemporary and Alternative Medicine (CAM). Contemporary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) are certain practices apart from conventional medical practices like allopathic (Fraser N; Watts and Benner DH, 1983). These practices provide scientific explanations to healing illness of body and mind. Such practices also include Reiki, Pranic Healing, and AYUSH, etc.,

Acupuncture, an ancient healing art and science that focus on maintaining the harmony of body and mind, replacing the blockages, correcting out the energy imbalances, energy transmission and flow, physical body-cosmic universe connection etc., Acupuncture focus on the "chi" or "qi" or parental energy that is inherited from our parents and ancestors alike genes. This energy provides the essential energy to child from birth, to nourish and to adolescents, to function well and leaves out the body after death. They provide essential energy and it transmits throughout body 24x7x365. Whenever the energy flow gets inhibited / blocked by some external or internal factors, the individual gets disease or illness. Acupuncture views any illness as some blockage in the energy flow, in some part of the body.

Acupuncture uses 12 energy channels, through which the chi energy flows through uninterrupted. These energy channels are similar to 10 body systems of human anatomy. They are Lung Meridian (LU), Large Intestine (LI), Spleen (Sp), Stomach (St), Pericardium (P), Tripple Warmer (TW), Heart (H), Small Intestine (SI), Liver (Liv), Gall Bladder (GB), Kidney (K), Urinary Bladder (UB). These meridians or energy channels runs through all over body parts and acupuncture and acupressure points are the toll gates that controls particular area around it, when gets blocked, can be cleared by triggering these acupuncture points. Acupressure focuses on the bio-electricity that controls all energy flows in all the meridians of body. When there is uninterrupted flow of bio-electricity the person would be healthy, changes or blockages in this flow leads to illness. Reflexology deals with the acupressure points that are present in both palms of hands and legs. These points are reflex centres of various body organs and the acupressure therapist would work on these points, to restore the bio-electricity of the body.

Acupuncture has another view that focuses on human body as manifested form of "Universe". Those lies in the universe, lies within the human body i.e., universe consists of 5 elements via Earth, Metal (Air), Water, Wood (Space), Fire which are present inside the body. Metal element of body controls Lung Meridian (LU), Large Intestine (LI); Earth element of body controls Spleen (Sp), Stomach (St); Fire element of body controls Pericardium (P), Tripple Warmer (TW), Heart (H), Small Intestine (SI); Wood element of body controls Liver (Liv), Gall Bladder (GB); Water element of body controls Kidney (K), Urinary Bladder (UB). Any imbalances in any of these elements can also be a cause of illness.

Stress

Stress is any pressure to body or mind. The term stress is derived from the Latin word "*Stringere*" which means 'to draw tight' (Keil, R.M.K., 2004). It is a person's physical and emotional response to change (Jan Van Dijk; 2009). The term stress refers to negative emotional experiences with associated behavioural, biochemical and physiological changes that are related to perceived acute or chronic challenges (Sarason and Sarason, 2012). Stress can have many profound effects on the human biological systems (Schacter, Daniel L.; Gilbert, Daniel T.; Wegner; Daniel M, 2011). Stressors are the events that stimulate these changes i.e., factors that cause stress are stressors. Stressors include daily life events, financial concerns, daily concerns, academic and failures in job, etc. Stress has its effects in body affecting the overall functioning of body and mind ranging from common cold to cancer. There are increased researches focusing on various aspects of stress and its effects in humans. Also, many managing techniques are emerging in order to deal with such stressors. But, coping methods like relaxation, biofeedback are popularly used in dealing with stress.

Acupuncture is highly known to deal with bodily illness rather than mental health problems. The reason is the limited awareness and stigmas that exists among people. Acupuncture and other alternative natural therapies not only focus on the symptoms of the illness, but they search for the root for such illness and make alterations, so that the disease, once cured will not get relapsed. Such therapies deal with body-mind relationship, so it focus human problem as holistic perspective dealing illness with response to physiological, psychological, emotional, behavioural perspective. But much alternative therapists do not focus on any of psychological illness or analyze the illness in other perspectives. The reason may be because of increased mindset of "instant" solutions of people. Therefore, even therapists fail to analyze the problems deeper, losing or ignoring their significance in treatment.

Case History: *A female of 40 years old was suffering from repeated headaches, insomnia, fatigue, troubles in digestion, overweight, heartburn, high blood pressure at times, reported body aches for more years. When diagnosed with reflexology points in both hand and leg, it was found that point no. 28 and 8 are been affected and point no. 29 was also affected. Also, with further sessions of history collection, there was considerable concerns in financial, personal, marital issues were found out to be initiative and these issues acted as stressors for this case, from where proposed illness were emerged out. The ultimate expression of fear of death, cry, anger burst out and concerns for her children were found to be due to stress.*

Psycho-physiological Formulation:

Hans Selye, considered to be *father of stress research*, has proposed his concept and another named **Cannon**, who originally brought the term into physiology and psychology studies from engineering, proposed the changes that take place in body in stressful situations.

Physiological Response to Stress:

As simple it is to explain how stress affects bodily functioning can be traced by **GAS** (General Adaptation Syndrome) that was developed by **Hans Selye** in his book "*The Stress of Life*" (1976) which has three progressive stages:

- **Alarm Reaction Stage:**

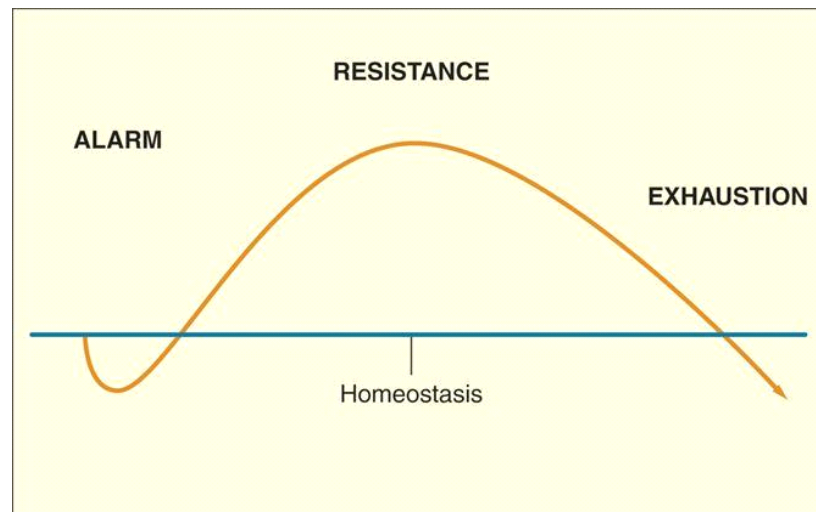
In the beginning of stress, the body mobilizes the resources to meet the stress. There are many physiological arousal reaction like increased heart beat, respiration, metabolism, etc. The symptoms like headache, fever appear. During this stage the normal resistance level decreases.

- **Stage of Resistance:**

If the stress continues, the organism enters into the second stage of resistance. In this stage, the organism develops resistance to stress. Physiological arousals reaction returns to normal. The symptom like headache and fatigue disappears. The body is able to resist the stress because of the hormones ACTH of pituitary gland and the adrenaline of adrenal gland. During this stages, the level of normal resistance increases.

- **Stage of Exhaustion:**

When stress continues, further the organism enters into exhaustion stage. The ACTH and Adrenaline hormones decrease and so the body is not in a position to resist the stress. Original symptoms like headache, fatigue reappears. When stress prolongs further organism enters into complete stage of exhaustion and it may result in death (Shelley, Taylor; 2006).

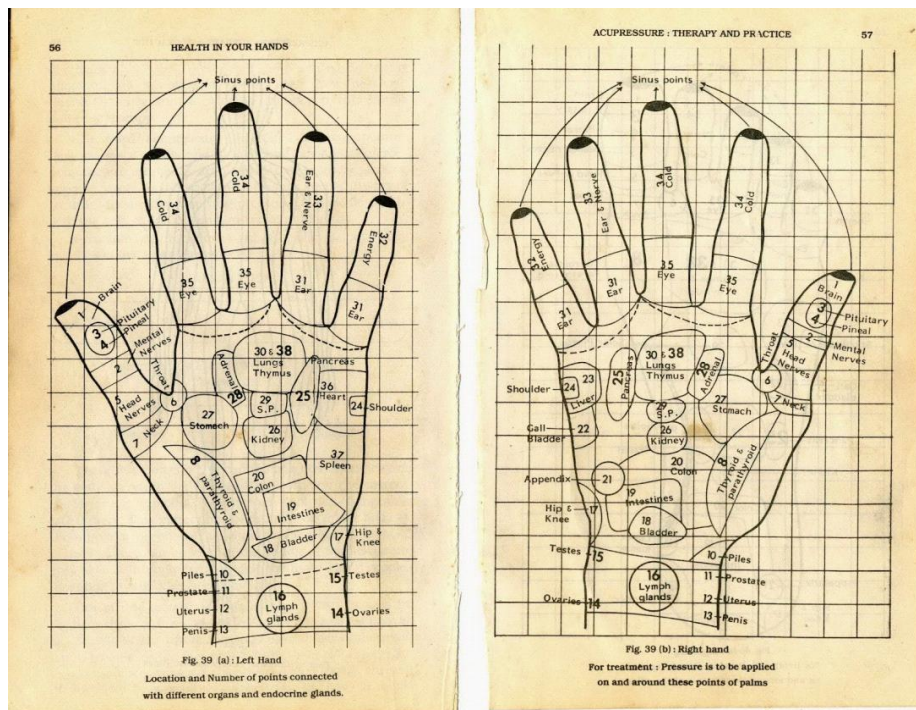
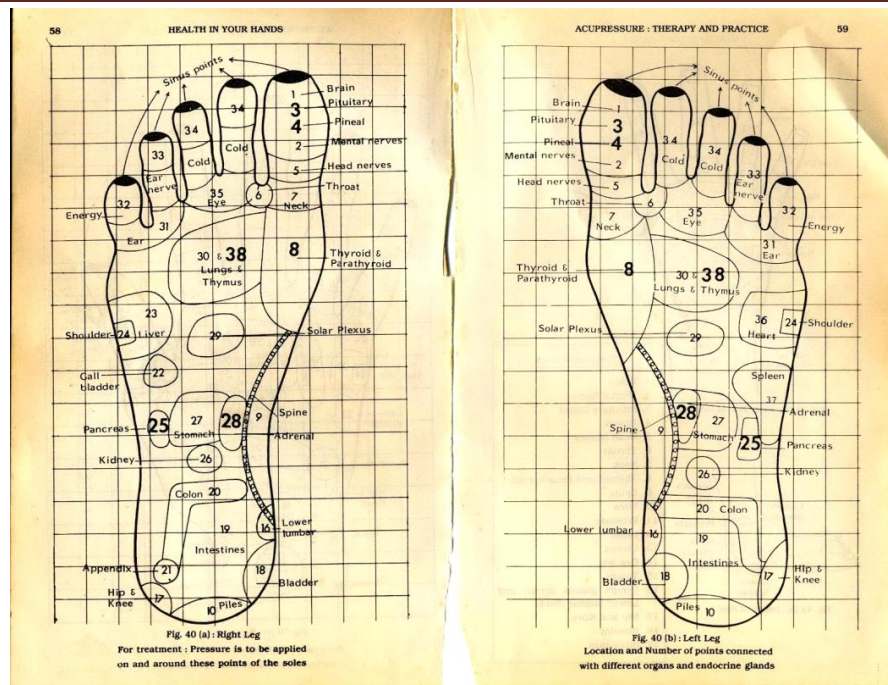


While examining the patient we found that she had the symptoms of alarm reaction stage such as headache, crossed stage of resistance where she is unable to cope up with her distress and ended up in the exhaustion stage. She developed chronic somatic symptoms and find it difficult to handle even the house chores.

Cannon proposal has been verified by more recent research eg. catecholamines (i.e., epinephrine and norepinephrine) are released during stress or arousal and accomplish many of the actions proposed by Cannon. His theory found that the function of adrenal gland is crucial in the stress reaction. According to acupuncture disturbances in the adrenal gland is linked with stress and stress related symptoms.

Treatment:

After diagnosing the patient, a thorough examination of the related pressure points was made. It has been found that the acupuncture points of 8, 28, 29 were found to be affected.

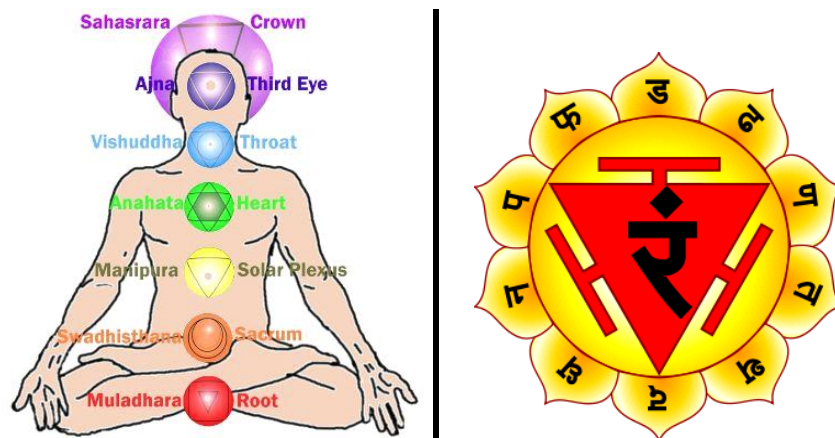


The acupressure point no. 8, 28 and 29 refers to the functioning/disturbances in the thyroid gland, adrenal gland and solar plexus respectively (Devendra Vora, 1997, 2001; Lakshmi P.B.V, Sastry

P.V.S., 2007). The pressure was given by thumb fingers in these points and the patients' would feel discomfort and pain even when pressed slightly.

- Thyroid gland is called as the barometer of the body. It plays the major role in the development of body, eliminating poisons and toxins, calcium and phosphorus levels in the body, controlling temperature of body. Any disturbances in the bio-electric flow in the body lead to disturbances in the thyroid and it gets reflected in point no.8. Also any illness that has occurred in the recent 24 hours could also be found by pressing this point. The corresponding chakra is Visuddha Chakra controlling air element, present in the throat region.
- Adrenal gland controls the fire and production of digestive juices, regulating the blood and sugar level, controlling stress, activeness and character building, controls the sodium and water balance in the body. Disturbances in the point reveals short-temperedness, digestive and blood pressure problems, no control over diet, restless, impatient, distress, dullness, loss of energy, acidity, headache, sleep disturbances, etc., The corresponding chakra is Manipura Chakra, present in the Kidney region (above the kidneys).
- Solar plexus is present in the navel region, from where all the nerves emerge. It is the Nabhi Chakra of the body. It gets frequently shifted due to various reasons. When the energy flow is improper, the solar plexus gets shifted. Thus it is important to analyze whether the solar plexus is in order or not.

The following figure shows the locations of those acupressure points in both hands and legs (Devendra Vora, 1997, 2001; Satish Goel, 2010).



It was evident from the case that stress and its symptoms could be traced from the disturbances in adrenal gland. Adrenal gland or Manipura chakra is the core responsible for controlling and expressing stress based symptoms. Continuous treatment on these regions would activate the under-working adrenal gland and helps to reduce the stress in the individual. On treating this point made her get back to normal functioning.

Conclusion:

Hence, the case and related concepts on bodily reactions to stress may act as effective evidences to say the influence of adrenal gland on the stress and arousal reactions in the individual. Also, the acupressure points that are identified in treating the stress symptoms can be used as a strategy to correlate the symptoms and treatment for stress in the individual. The art and science of acupuncture and acupressure can provide enough details that help a therapist to identify the core problem of any illness.

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