

Acupuncture Halts Neck Pain From Disc Degeneration

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Researchers confirm the effectiveness of acupuncture for the treatment of cervical spondylosis, a painful disorder caused by intervertebral disc degeneration. The term cervical spondylosis refers to general wear and tear of the discs in the cervical spine. Often with age, the spinal discs degenerate and osteoarthritis ensues. The acupuncture point GV14 was

determined effective across multiple studies for the treatment of cervical spondylosis. Based on the evidence, this acupuncture point is recommended for patients with cervical spondylosis.

Shao et al. tested the efficacy of acupuncture using the following acupuncture points:

- GV14 (Dazhui)
- SI3 (Houxi)
- GV20 (Sanyangwuhui, Baihui)
- GB20 (Fengchi)

The acupuncture needle at Dazhui was perpendicularly inserted to a depth of 13 – 20 mm and then a 15 mm moxa cone was put on the handle of the needle after deqi (the arrival of qi). Deqi was elicited at the other acupoints combined with electroacupuncture stimulation. Fengchi was connected to Houxi on the afflicted side and Fengchi was connected to Baihui on the healthy side with standard electrodes.

Acupuncture was applied once per day, five times per week, for a total of two weeks as one course of

treatment. The results indicate that 24 out of 25 cases improved significantly for a total effective rate of 96%. [1]

The research team of Zhang et al. produced similar results. [2] Patients in the study received acupuncture for cervical spondylosis once per day for seven days, comprising one course of patient care. The following acupuncture points were applied to all patients:

- GV14 (Dazhui)
- GB20 (Fengchi)
- GV20 (Sanyangwuhui or Baihui)
- EX-B2 (Jiaji)
- BL10 (Tianzhu)
- EX-HN1 (Sishencong)

A total of 53 out of 60 cases improved significantly, producing a total effective rate of 88.3%. In addition, 31.7% of all cases experienced a complete recovery from all symptoms. Li et al. conducted a clinical trial testing the effectiveness of fire needling with the following acupuncture points: [3]

- GV14 (Dazhui)
- EX-B2 (Jiaji)
- BL18 (Ganshu)
- BL23 (Shenshu)
- SI3 (Houxi)
- LI4 (Hegu)
- LI11 (Quchi)
- SJ5 (Waiguan)

In the fire needle group, 37 patients received quick needling with fire needling. In the control group, the above acupoints were inserted to 15 – 20 mm with $0.30 \times 25 - 40$ mm disposable filiform needles. The needles were retained for 20 minutes after manual needle stimulation with twisting, lifting, and thrusting. All patients received acupuncture 3 times per week for 6 weeks. For patients receiving fire needling, acupuncture produced a 94.6% total effective rate. Routine filiform needling produced a 78.4% total effective rate.

Qiu et al. conducted a randomized, single-blinded parallel study. A total of 284 patients were divided into two groups (acupuncture and control). The following acupuncture points were used in the acupuncture group: [4]

- GV14 (Dazhui)
- EX-B2 (Jiaji)
- GB20 (Fengchi)

The acupuncture group achieved a 96.2% total effective rate. The results indicate that the aforementioned acupuncture point prescription is an effective selection for the treatment of cervical spondylosis.

Discussion

Researchers have tested the effective action of Dazhui (GV14) and conclude the following: [5]

- GV14 regulates the glutamate (a neurotransmitter) content of cells supporting the restoration of nerve conduction.
- GV14 improves free radical scavenging.
- GV14 regulates FAK (focal adhesion kinase, PTK2) expression.
- GV14 ameliorates excess blood viscosity in patients with cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases.
- GV14 enhances and regulates central monoamine neurotransmitters, including the ability to protect the body from brain damage after ischemia.
- GV14 regulates aspartate (Asp), an amino acid active in biosynthesis of proteins, especially in conjunction with its ability to regulate glutamate (Glu) for the protection of brain tissue to prevent neuronal necrosis.
- GV14 improves blood flow to prevent ischemic damage to neurons.
- GV14 improves the levels of NO (nitric oxide) and NOS (nitric oxide synthase) in cerebral tissue after ischemia.
- GV14 regulates calcium ions in brain cells, avoiding pathological nerve cell apoptosis after ischemia.
- GV14 enhances the expression of NGF (nerve growth factor), especially after central ischemia.

Across the acupuncture education research papers mentioned above, the traditional Chinese medicine view of GV14 was reviewed. The following are several important principles mentioned in the research

papers. GV14 is the meeting point of the Governing Vessel (Du Mai) with the six yang channels of the hand and foot, referred to as Zhu Yang Zhi Hui. GV14 warms the yang, clears heat, strengthens the body, and dispels wind and dampness. Needling GV14 raises the lucid yang and dispels wind, cold, and dampness. GV14 invigorates blood circulation. The researchers also presented the traditional Chinese medicine view of cervical spondylosis. Cervical spondylosis is due to obstruction of the channels, involving both qi and blood stasis. Chronic cases involve kidney, liver, qi, and blood deficiency. [6]

GV14 benefits qi and blood circulation and cervical spondylosis involves obstruction of qi and blood circulation. The Chinese medicine principles indicate that GV14 is well-suited for the treatment of cervical spondylosis. In addition, the aforementioned controlled studies demonstrate that acupuncture point prescriptions containing GV14 are appropriate choices for the treatment of cervical spondylosis.

GV14 Wellness Combinations

At the Healthcare Medicine Institute (HealthCMi), we provide many acupuncture continuing education courses on the treatment of musculoskeletal pain and internal medicine disorders. The online courses and live acupuncture webinars for CEU and NCCAOM PDA license renewal credit feature Chinese medicine, classical acupuncture, herbal medicine, and modern research. As part of HealthCMi's acupuncture education outreach, we present the following additional information about GV14 (DU14) to supplement the aforementioned research..

GV14 is a powerful acupuncture point used for the treatment of infections, inflammation, and immune system imbalances. The combination of GV14, GV13, GV12, LI11, and ST36 is a classic wellness acupuncture point combination and was often used by Prof. Wae Shui in his clinical practice. This treatment is often applied in the seated position.

GV14 is used in Chinese medicine to quell internal wind, expel external wind, and benefit the wei qi. GV14 is also an important point for the treatment of malaria. Notably, the research headed by Prof. Wae Shui in the 1950s demonstrated that application of the aforementioned wellness treatment (GV14, GV13, GV12, LI11, ST36) is effective for the treatment of malaria. Recent clinical work also employs the use of this acupuncture point prescription for the treatment of Lyme's disease and associated co-infections, often in combination with the herbal formula Da Yuan Yin Wan jia Qing Hao.

Notes

- [1] Shao YX. *Clinical study on treatment of vertebral artery type of cervical spondylosis with warm needling Dazhui [D]*. Guangzhou: Guangzhou University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, 2008.
- [2] Zhang ZC, Du SC. *Acupuncture combined with bloodletting in Dazhui in the treatment of vertebral artery type cervical spondylosis [J]*. SHAANXI ZHONGYI, 2013, 34(8): 1045.
- [3] Li B, Xie XC, Feng Y. *Clinical observation on the treatment of nerve root type of cervical spondylosis with fire needling [J]*. Beijing Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine, 2010, 29(12): 920.
- [4] Qiu L, Zhang M, Zhang J. *Treatment of 142 cases of neck type of cervical spondylosis in pubers by acupuncture of warming yang and regulating with traction therapy [J]*. SHAANXI ZHONGYI, 2007, 28(4): 475.
- [5] Yan D, Chen C, Song YM. *Research progress in the treatment of cervical spondylosis with Dazhui acupoint [J]*. Shandong Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine, 2018, 37(3): 262 – 266.
- [6] *Ibid.*