

# Acupuncture & Herbs Cut Childhood Emergency Asthma

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Children with asthma receiving a combination of acupuncture, herbal medicine and conventional medications have superior patient outcomes, less visits to emergency rooms, and fewer hospitalizations than children receiving only conventional medications. Researchers investigated 12,580 children receiving asthma medical care across 15 multi-hospitals in a five year study. Traditional Chinese Medicine (acupuncture, herbal medicine, Chinese Tuina massage, herbal pastes) was combined with

pharmaceutical drugs including inhaled bronchodilators and steroids in the study protocol. The integrative medicine approach, TCM plus conventional drugs, produced an astonishing result. Not a single child receiving integrative medicine during the study required an emergency room (ER) visit or hospitalization. The superior clinical outcomes and reduction of medical emergencies suggests that integrating TCM into conventional protocols benefits children with asthma.

## Single-Payer Investigation

The Bureau of National Health Insurance (BNHI) of Taiwan established a single-payer healthcare system in 1995 called the Taiwan National Health Insurance (NHI). Under this system, an examination of 1 million patient records yielded a sample size of 12,580 asthmatic children for investigation. The BNHI paid for all of the medical visits and examined the cost-effectiveness of combining TCM therapies (acupuncture, herbs, Tuina massage) and conventional pharmaceutical care. It was found that there is an additional upfront cost to provide TCM therapies but there is a savings on the backend in reduced emergency room visits and hospitalizations. The findings demonstrate that adding acupuncture, herbal medicine and other TCM procedures to conventional protocols provides a cost-effective approach for asthmatic children while producing superior patient outcomes.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) treatment combined with conventional treatment provided additional benefits. There was a reduction in school absenteeism. The children's parents had less disruption of their work schedules. There was less of a burden on families to provide caregivers. The government shouldered lower overall costs and responsibilities associated with asthmatic care. The study demonstrates that combining TCM with conventional medicine for asthmatic children "may have a substantial impact" in reducing the severity of asthma, frequency of emergency services, hospitalizations and costs of providing care by parents.

The study documents several herbal formulas and acupuncture points found effective for the treatment of asthma by modern research. The herbal formula Xiao Qing Long Tang is effective for treating asthma with white sputum and a nocturnal cough. Additional research demonstrates Xiao Qing Long Tang's ability to "attenuate allergic airway inflammation" and to "prevent asthma through neurotrophin regulation." The herbal formula Ding Chuan Tang demonstrates effectiveness for treating asthma with yellow sputum. Additional research shows that Ding Chuan Tang "may improve airway hyper-responsiveness in stabilized asthmatic children."

Two important acupuncture points were highlighted in the research. LU10 (Yuji) and ST36 (Zusanli) were shown to "regulate cardiopulmonary function, Fas and Bcl-2 mRNA expression, and promote eosinophil apoptosis in the asthmatic state..." Chinese therapeutic massage, Tuina, at the DU and Bladder Foot-Taiyang channels on the back improved "key pulmonary functions in asthmatic children." Herbal pastes applied to acupuncture points BL13 (Feishu), BL12 (Fengmen) and DU14 (Dazhui) demonstrated the ability to help asthmatics. The herbal pastes consisted of:

*Bai Jie (Sinapis alba L., white mustard)*

*Xi Xin (Asarum heterotropoides, wild ginger)*

*Gan Sui (Euphorbia kansui)*

*Yanhusuo (Corydalis yanhusuo)*

*Bing Pian (Dryobalanops aromatica, borneol)*

*Gan Jiang (Zingiber officinale, dried ginger)*

Two additional key observations were made. The incidence of children with asthma is increasing over time and those unresponsive to conventional therapies may benefit from adding Traditional Chinese Medicine to the regime of care. The researchers note, "Our findings suggest that asthmatic children at partly controlled level(s) under conventional therapy may benefit from adjuvant treatment with integrated TCM." This study and its recommendations demonstrates the inherent impetus within a single-payer healthcare system to support improved patient outcomes and cost-effective care.



Reference:

Hung, Yu-Chiang, I-Ling Hung, Mao-Feng Sun, Chih-Hsin Muo, Bei-Yu Wu, Ying-Jung Tseng, and Wen-Long Hu. "Integrated traditional Chinese medicine for childhood asthma in Taiwan: a Nationwide cohort study." BMC complementary and alternative medicine 14, no. 1 (2014): 389.