

Facial Revitalisation Acupuncture

Facial Revitalisation Acupuncture: an Introduction by Virginia Doran – deel 2

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FRA: possible underlying mechanisms

One of the many explanations of the various mechanisms by which acupuncture works is that with needle insertion, the body endures a micro-trauma that in turn stimulates the injury repair system within the body. It is this natural healing process that stimulates the production of collagen at the site of the needle insertion. Regeneration of the dermis and epidermis produces new collagen and elastin proteins. New skin tissue essentially appears younger.

The University of California in San Francisco is undertaking a study on wound healing with acupuncture, based on a hypothesis that using acupuncture will facilitate wound healing, which is based on evidence that acupuncture causes increased blood circulation locally. Blood contains vital nutrients, hormones, oxygen and life force and will revitalise tissues that it infuses.

As we age, all our bodily systems decline: our circulation slows down and can become impeded, our hormonal levels drop, our ability to digest and absorb our food decreases so that we no longer operate at our peak levels as we may have in the past. FRA helps to bring all the bodily systems up to the optimum

levels possible for that person while appeasing their appetite for a younger appearance.

FRA: contraindications

Facial revitalisation acupuncture is contraindicated for some pituitary disorders such as a pituitary tumor, heart disorders, individuals who have a problem with bleeding, such as haemophiliacs, or those who are extraordinarily prone to bruising. Administering FRA to anyone with high blood pressure or diabetes is forbidden even if these conditions are said to be 'controlled' through medications. For those who would be described in TCM as being of a livery nature, caution and extra efforts should be applied to prevent headaches and dizziness. Administering FRA to people who suffer with migraines should be avoided. For those patients who are diagnosed as being HIV positive or having developed AIDS, this type of acupuncture should be avoided. Caution should be exercised if the patient has had hepatitis previously. Judiciousness should be exercised if facial lymphoedema is present as these patients are far more prone to infection. If the patient is prone to wheezing as in the case of asthmatics, or in the presence of a serious cough, one must consult the patient as to the frequency and severity of the condition and judge if the patient can comfortably and



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safely receive a long and perhaps intense treatment. Facial revitalisation acupuncture should not be administered to a pregnant woman as there are points used that are forbidden in pregnancy besides the obvious difference in treatment strategy of bringing so much qi to the surface. Similarly, FRA would not be advisable during any acute illness or any chronic illness that is serious in nature, when a headache or nausea is present, during a bout of cold or 'flu, or during an acute allergic reaction or in the presence of an acute herpes outbreak, hangover or intoxication of any sort. Regular forms of acupuncture are generally recommended and found to be beneficial for the above contraindications to FRA. Great caution should be exercised with those patients who are undergoing or have had plastic surgery, botulinum toxin injections and similar allopathic cosmetic procedures.

FRA: patient suitability

Almost everyone could benefit from this type of acupuncture provided they possess no contraindications. Ideal subjects for FRA treatment are both male and female subjects in middle age. The more out of balance, emotionally distressed or aged a person looks, the increased likeliness for more dramatic results. Obviously someone aged 25 will not look 15 years younger from FRA. If potential patients in their

twenties or thirties request FRA treatment, one should try to convey to them the results may not be as dramatic as if they were to embark upon a treatment series in their forties, fifties, or sixties for example. If however, they are satisfied with looking perhaps only five years younger and helping to maintain the way they look now for a longer period along with using the treatments as preventative medicine, not just for ageing signs but also for overall health, then one can proceed in treating them. Patient expectations have to be addressed before a series of treatment is embarked upon. For some patients in their sixties or older, they are more prone to have contraindications, or might not be able to tolerate such a strong treatment without modification. Age limits will ultimately depend on the individual seeking treatment.

The course of treatment

I recommend a treatment series consisting of 12 treatments, although I have seen instances in books from China where 20-60 acupuncture sessions are employed for this purpose. Treatments may be administered once or twice a week with a day off or more between treatments. Optimally, it is better to do more treatments scheduled closer together initially. Twice a week for the first three weeks and once a week for six weeks after that would be even more effective than once a week for twelve weeks. It is my experience that performing a longer (approximately 90 minute session) and more thorough treatment will not only give better results to the outcome of your work, but also will help create and maintain a

good reputation for this specialty of acupuncture and, to some extent, the field at large. Quality treatments preclude the need for such large quantities of treatment.

The aesthetic benefits are usually observed in the first session in most subjects. Acupuncture benefits are cumulative in effect and with FRA tend to become significantly more noticeable and lasting midway through the series. The subsequent treatments help to ensure the magnitude and duration of the effects from the FRA treatment series.

Following the initial course of treatment, maintenance sessions administered seasonally or monthly will prolong the results for many years. How long the effects will last is difficult to know and will depend on the quality and quantity of the treatments performed as well as the age, lifestyle, emotional state and internal health of the patient.

Although highly effective when facial revitalisation acupuncture is employed exclusively, results are magnified when FRA is augmented with herbal and nutritional supplements, facial massage and/or acupressure, facial exercises, therapeutic grade essential oils and aromatherapy blends for the skin, lifestyle counseling and a healthy balanced diet. I have found it to be vital to treat the psycho-spiritual issues that often surround the ageing process and for self-esteem, particularly when the self-esteem is based on body image and appearance. Acupuncture, minute doses of Chinese herbs, homeopathy or the utilization of vibrational remedies such as flower essences can all be used for this objective if they are

within your professional training and scope of practice.

From clinical experience, I have found the order of insertion and removal of needles both on the face and the body to be important. I recommend the following order of insertion: auricular points followed by points on the body, starting with points to ground the qi on the feet, moving up the body using points on the legs, hands, arms, trunk, neck, and scalp before needling points on the face itself. The face is very sensitive to needle insertion and thus commencing with needling of ear points can release endorphins and has something of an anaesthetizing effect on the face. While the mechanism is not exactly clear, needling ear points gives a much greater glow to the face and must in some way be affecting the shen as well as reflexively treating specific areas of the face. I actually use many of the identical points when administering acupuncture for dental anaesthesia as I do when performing FRA. Since so much qi, blood and yang are stimulated to ascend to the head with this protocol, I have found it essential to use points on yang meridians on the feet such as GB 41 (zu lin qi) and St 44 (nei ting) to anchor the qi, especially that of the gall bladder meridian. These points are highly efficacious in preventing headaches and dizziness from the treatment. While I have not found it to be a problem when giving treatments in my own practice, I have found it to be problematic in the clinical component of the workshops which may stem from having the needles retained too long in a class situation, as can sometimes happen when people are nervous and learning a new technique.

There are some styles of acupuncture that embrace using a lot of needles and there are clearly those that do not. Like many aspects of the Daoist art that we practise, there are many anomalies as to how to practise acupuncture. I do not think anybody would say that more needles are better in principle. This treatment, however, requires a lot of needles because you are treating all the internal causes of the signs of their ageing process as well as lots of local needling. If the constitutional points were not used, the treatment would be only symptomatic in nature and the results temporary at best. Extra points to ground the qi are essential to prevent headaches or dizziness. If you want to see an aesthetic result you must also insert a needle locally in most instances. Otherwise, why do not patients look years younger from regular acupuncture without the use of so many local needles? Patients can easily tolerate lots of face needles when there is a gentle insertion with virtually no stimulation or manipulation of the needles. The face is highly vascular and bruises much more easily than other parts of the body. Utilising a thicker gauge needle increases the discomfort level and risk of bruising. For most points an even insertion is advisable. Manipulating the needles during insertion or once they are in can create more risk of bruising and possible overstimulation of the patient. Rather, points can be tonified or dispersed through intention. For the majority of body points, the intention would be to tonify. Obtaining de qi sensation is not necessary for effective results or recommended for FRA, especially on the face points. Despite theories

of needle technique regarding the speed of inserting and removing needles, I highly recommend a slow removal of the needles with gentle pressure afterwards for a few seconds. These extra measures will greatly reduce the risk of bruising. It is essential to have anti-bruising agents on hand to prevent and treat any possible haematomas that could occur.

FRA: the advantages

As acupuncture practitioners, we know that treating the underlying cause of why someone is ageing is preferable to masking the outward symptoms and allowing further decline and dysfunction to continue within the body. Acupuncture is an excellent alternative for cosmetic surgery, and potentially dangerous cosmetic procedures such as botox. Far less costly than cosmetic surgery, it is safe, having no risk of disfigurement or side effects other than bruising. Unlike those kinds of procedures which may require an extended recovery period with swelling and discolouration, there is no trauma from facial revitalisation acupuncture. Obviously, facial revitalisation acupuncture cannot reshape one's nose, but it can achieve a more subtle rejuvenation that takes years off one's face, safely and naturally while most importantly, improving overall health.

Footnotes:

1. In the United States the terms rejuvenation and revitalisation are used interchangeably in common use without distinction as they are in the United Kingdom. The British Acupuncture Council has specified the use of Facial Revitalisation Acupuncture to be utilised to describe this practice in accordance with the guideli-

nes of the Advertising Standards Agency.

2. I have found Seirin brand needles help to minimise the sensation of the insertion and are less likely to cause any adverse reactions such as erythema and leaving marks on the skin, which is possible with poor quality needles where the coating of the needle is more apt to come off and irritate the skin. Spinex intradermals are also of good quality and come from Seirin.

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