

VIRGINIA DORAN (USA), KENT | An Introduction to Facial Revitalisation Acupuncture*

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Virginia Doran, M.Ac., L.Ac., L.M.T has been practicing in the field of holistic health for thirty years. She holds a Masters of Science in Acupuncture and licenses in Acupuncture and Massage Therapy as well as being national board certified in both Acupuncture and Chinese Herbology (NCCAOM). • Virginia has been a teacher and lecturer in the field of holistic health since 1980 on subjects which include massage therapy, acupuncture, aromatherapy, nutrition, flower essences, Chinese and Western herbs, and supplements. She is a recognized expert and pioneer in the field of healthy aging and beauty through holistic means. Virginia is actively sought after internationally to train practitioners in the method of Facial Rejuvenation Acupuncture which she originated in 1995 and various other modalities. • Virginia has created a referral service on her website to share the benefits of the extensive publicity she has received about her work in newspapers, magazines, radio and major television networks. She was especially honored in 1997 to have been the first Westerner to teach acupuncture in Japan. • Virginia is currently writing two books on Facial Rejuvenation: an instructional text for practitioners of Oriental Medicine and a book for the public on her full program of facial rejuvenation. For more information please see www.luminousbeauty.com.

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Preliminary Note

This is an introduction to the subject of Facial Revitalisation Acupuncture (FRA) or Facial Rejuvenation Acupuncture, as it is commonly referred to in the United States and most other English speaking countries. FRA is a virtually painless method firmly rooted in the principles of oriental medicine. Like regular acupuncture, FRA involves differential diagnosis and the use of multiple needles to move or balance the *qi*, blood, and fluids within the body as well as restore or maintain harmony between the five elements, yin and yang, and the various *zang fu*. The visible aesthetic results on the face are generated from treating both the root (*ben*) and the branch (*biao*) reflecting the improvement in overall health that is simultaneously achieved. In China and in Chinese literature, it is referred to as *mei rong*, which translates as Chinese medical cosmetology.

Keywords: Facial rejuvenation acupuncture, facial revitalisation acupuncture, cosmetic acupuncture, Chinese medical cosmetology, TCM cosmetology, *mei rong*, facial acupuncture, acupuncture facelift, facial rejuvenation, facial revitalisation, facial renewal, acupuncture facial rejuvenation, Chinese medical dermatology, TCM dermatology, holistic beauty, facial skin, longevity, dermatology.

Introduction

Facial revitalisation acupuncture [1] (FRA), or facial rejuvenation acupuncture, is a virtually painless method for reducing the signs of the ageing process with results far more profound than merely what is visible on the face. Although sometimes referred to as cosmetic acupuncture, an acupuncture facelift, or facial acupuncture, it is far more than a cosmetic procedure. For thousands of years, the Chinese have known that beauty originates from the inside and addressed the subject accordingly. There is a famous Chinese axiom, 'Where *qi* goes, blood flows'. Thus even for those unfamiliar with the principles of Chinese medicine, it is known that increased circulation helps the body to look and feel better. Including the term revitalisation or rejuvenation when referring to this practice helps to reflect its inherent nature. In China and in Chinese literature you will find it referred to as *mei rong*, which translates as Chinese medical cosmetology. *Mei rong*, or FRA, relies upon and is a further development of traditional

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 guidelines of the Advertising Standards Agency.

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Chinese medicine (TCM) theory and practice. It can be likened to a new blossom of an ancient tree of knowledge.

FRA is a very thorough and effective process designed to help the whole body both look and feel younger. It involves the use of extra fine gauge filiform acupuncture needles and intradermals (preferably Seirin brand needles) [2]. As with regular acupuncture, points are chosen according to the constitution of the individual and specific needs at the time of treatment. The established parameters of diagnosis and treatment strategy will generally apply when practising FRA. Many local points on the face and head are also needed to obtain the extra cosmetic effects. Other than bruising and haematomas, there is virtually no risk or adverse side effects. Headaches and dizziness are possible if the precautions of grounding the qi and releasing any tight neck muscles are not exercised before administering FRA.

Thousands of years ago the Chinese discovered that many meridians either commence or terminate on the face and some have internal branches that go to the face, correlating the relationship of health and appearance. Changes and deterioration in the skin, muscle tone, and sense organs reflect the state of the *zang fu*, *qi*, blood, yin and yang. Different treatment methods are emphasised and specific points chosen according to how an individual is manifesting his or her ageing process or health imbalances. The whole person is treated and evaluated on the body-mind continuum – the foundation of Chinese medicine. The use of acupuncture for ‘cosmetic’ purposes has already attracted great attention worldwide. The media have latched on to this trend, fuelled by the current cultural obsession with looking youthful and reports of celebrities receiving this treatment. It is not surprising that many seeking FRA treatment are those who have not received acupuncture before, or who would not seek acupuncture and Chinese medicine otherwise. There are several different types of cosmetic acupuncture being practised in the West. Therefore, some of the benefits, findings, and suggestions may apply solely to the method of FRA that I teach and practise.

Cosmetic acupuncture does not require the use of electro-acupuncture or e-stim that is so commonly used for this purpose. It has been my experience and that of many practitioners that a good protocol and precise technique actually work much better without

the use of extraneous devices. My personal opinion is that technology, albeit useful in certain aspects of acupuncture treatment, is no substitute for skilled hands, the cultivated *qi* of the practitioner and attunement with the *qi* of the patient. In addition, the head is more susceptible to influences of pathogenic wind and I have seen many patients who have received electro-acupuncture or micro-current for this kind of treatment who have developed facial tics coinciding with their cosmetic acupuncture series. These modalities should be used with caution, especially for those patients that have an internal terrain that is predisposed to wind.

A Brief History of Chinese Medical Cosmetology

The quest for beauty and longevity is universal and has prevailed throughout the ages. Preoccupation with youth, appearance, and longevity is certainly not the exclusive domain of citizens of the modern Western world. Beauty seduces many to pursue healthful measures. Indeed, the earliest evidence for this in China dates back to 50,000 years ago (the late Paleolithic period) from relics of adornment found and materials believed to be for make-up and visual enhancement. Before the Warring States period of Chinese history (475–221 BC) having acupuncture treatment for cosmetic concerns was primarily a luxury, generally reserved for the Empress and the imperial concubines to initiate the healing process for rejuvenation and longevity as well as health. Theory and treatment for aesthetic concerns can be found in the *Huang Di Nei Jing* (from the first or second century BC according to different sources). The *Nei Jing* describes the effects of age on the skin and appearance, conditions that relate to the aforementioned and techniques used to treat these including acupuncture, moxibustion, facial massage and *qi gong*. While laying the foundation of traditional Chinese medicine, the *Huang Di Nei Jing* also sets the stage for the formation of TCM cosmetology, though no one section of this Chinese medicine classic is specifically devoted to it.

Pathological manifestations of the skin such as acne are discussed and their aetiology explained in the *Sheng Qi Tong Tian Lun*, a chapter of the Plain Questions in the *Huang Di Nei Jing*. The *Nei Jing* also describes the relationship between diet, health and appearance and has dietary recommendations, including the preparation of specific foods. The first Chinese pharmacopoeia, the *Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing* (The Divine Farmer's Materia Medica Classic) contains 43 herbal cosmetological references. The author, *Shen Nong*, is thought to have lived from 2737 BC to 2697 BC, his

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.

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 over-stimulation 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.

Facial Rejuvenation Acupuncture: 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.

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