

Daniela Vari-Lippert

Sep.13/18

Case Study #1

Acupressure for Menopausal Symptoms

Mary Smith is a 54 year old woman who is very tidy and likes things “in there place”. She works along side her husband to run their business. She lives with her husband and two kids. She was born in Europe and moved to Canada twenty years ago. Her father and other immediate family still live abroad, but she goes to visit them every two years. Mary loves her family and enjoys traveling. On rainy days she is sure to be spending time planning the next vacation. She is very hard working and is good at staying on top of her work but often becomes stressed at her home chores. Mary goes to yoga two times a week and likes to go on hikes on the weekends.

### Medical History

Mary is in good physical and mental health but states that she lately has a fluctuating emotional state. She does not take any drugs but does take daily vitamins. Mary did recently start menopause and has since noticed some changes in the way she normally feels physically and emotionally. She and others around her have noticed her mood changes. She has become less patient and easily angered. Mary also describes herself as a worry-full person who at times may be prone to over exaggerate situations which in turn makes her and the people around her stressed. Recently her father in Europe has been going through some medical issues which has added additional stress into Mary’s life. She relates feeling guilty about not being there to help take care of him. Mary’s mother in law is also having medical issues which adds even more stress.

Physically she has been having tight shoulder and neck muscles with occasional headaches/migraines. For these symptoms she has been seeking care from a chiropractor and massage therapist three times a month. With the start of menopause she has been experiencing hot flashes, weight gain and night sweats. Overall her physical health is very good and she stays active when she can.

### First Visit

Observing Mary she seems very sure of herself and strong willed. Upon first meeting her she had a strong handshake and appeared to be very concentrated on our conversation. Her tone at first was stern but as we talked more her voice became softer. She had no trouble answering any questions that I had asked and was very open. This was Mary's first acupressure session, so she had lots of questions about how she would be feeling during and after.

When taking Mary's pulses I noticed Gall Bladder to be very light almost unnoticeable, and could not feel a pulse for Liver. Taking the pulses and getting to know Mary a little bit I got the sense that a causative factor could be the wood element.

I chose to do the Great Regulator since this was her first session and its a good introduction into acupressure. Points that are significant in this meridian are TW.16 and GB.21 they are helpful for releasing neck and shoulder pain and GB.14 is great for headaches. GB.20 is the most important point in this meridian for Mary because not only does it address these past two symptoms but it is also relieves menopausal symptoms like hot flashes, dizziness, stress and irritability. I spent extra time holding this point for these reasons. Mary enjoyed this session and said the ending neck and shoulder release was very relaxing.

### Second Visit

Mary was excited to get started and was very interested in what I would chose for our second session. I asked her if she had anything that had been bothering her since the last session and she mentioned she was not getting as much sleep as she normally would. Her pulses were the same as last visit showing Gall Bladder and Liver deficient. I chose to do the Female regulating release because it has many points for menopausal symptoms and insomnia. Points that are very important in this release are LV.3 which can help with mood swings, anxiety, irritability, insomnia, headaches and dizziness and SP.6 which is useful for promoting the general balance of all issues of female regulation. There has been research that this point can increase estrogen levels which can important for women who are going through menopause as these levels decline.

### Third Visit

Since the last visit Mary has been having better sleeps and she only suffered from one headache. I decided to work on the Gall Bladder meridian since it is one of her deficient pulses. Again this meridian has the same important points as the great regulator, GB.20 and it also has GB.14 which helps calm the spirit and release neck tension. GB.41, GB.39, TW.16, GB.34, and GB.21 are all helpful for headaches. After the session I decided to give Mary some Pal Dan Gum exercises for homework. I chose “Swinging Trunk and Head” to stretch the Gall Bladder meridian and “Punching with Angry Eyes” to release blocked qi in the shoulders. I told her to do these each 3 times, once a day and to focus on her breathing.

#### Fourth Visit

The treatments had been a week apart but for the fourth visit we stretched it 2 weeks apart to see what would happen with her sleep patterns and headaches. Mary said she had a couple headaches but they haven't been as frequent as they were prior to seeing me. Her sleep is consistent but she isn't getting the full 9 hours she would like. She said she has been more irritable lately and has lashed out unnecessarily. For this treatment I did the Liver meridian because it has many points to help with Mary's mood swings. I am hopeful it will have some impact on her easily angered state. Points that help with this are LV.5, LV.3, BL.42, and CV.12. Her pulses were the same and I told her to continue with her Pal Dan Gum.

#### Fifth Visit

While discussing her progress from the last treatment Mary mentioned she had an anger outburst at her family that she was not proud of. She confessed that she was feeling very upset that she had been acting grumpy for no reason and feels “farther away from her family than normal.” Now that I'm sure her CF is Wood I decided to work specifically on that element so I chose to use the Grandmother/grandchild cycle to transfer energy to her deficient Liver meridian. Since Gall Bladder is also deficient I used the Lo point to transfer energy from the yin meridian to the yang meridian. I mentioned that in an angered state she might find it beneficial to go somewhere quiet and do the “Punching with Angry Eyes” exercise to try and let out the frustration. I recommended that we return back to treatments a week apart as she found she felt better mentally and physically when the treatment was more frequent.

## Conclusion

Mary's shoulder and neck tension has significantly decreased since first seeing her. I believe the tension is caused from her stress and anger. I am also certain that this stress is aggravated by her other menopausal symptoms. Treating the anger itself has been the most beneficial way in releasing the neck and shoulder tension. She is still dealing with her mood swings but has seen an improvement and has less stressful days and more restful sleeps.

Mary has come along way from the first time seeing her but I know there is still more work that needs to be done. Since her menopausal transition is not something that will just go away in the short term, we talked about doing regular sessions to help with the symptoms that come along with it. She is really grateful that even though things aren't perfect she has felt an increase in her quality of life. It is very fulfilling hearing this from Mary since this was my first time working with someone like this. I noticed in these last few sessions that she had smiled more and her neck and shoulder tension released significantly. While I don't think my treatments have altered her hormonal changes, I've learned a lot from working with her and I feel more confident in treating menopausal symptoms in the future.

## References

Acupuncture.org.uk. (2018). *Menopause and acupuncture: the evidence for effectiveness*. [online] Available at: <https://www.acupuncture.org.uk/a-to-z-of-conditions/public-review-papers/menopause-and-acupuncture-the-evidence-for-effectiveness.html> [Accessed 12 Sep. 2018].

Borud EK, Alræk T, White A, et al The acupuncture treatment for postmenopausal hot flushes (Acuflysh) study: traditional Chinese medicine diagnoses and acupuncture points used, and their relation to the treatment response  
*Acupuncture in Medicine* 2009;27:101-108

Australian Menopause Centre. (2018). *The Benefits of Acupuncture for Reducing Menopausal Symptoms - Australian Menopause Centre*. [online] Available at: <https://www.menopausecentre.com.au/information-centre/articles/benefits-acupuncture-reducing-menopausal-symptoms/> [Accessed 12 Sep. 2018].