

# Acupressure

## Akupressur

(Derleme)

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### ABSTRACT

Acupressure is a therapy for the relief of pain symptoms that places physical pressure on different points on the surface of the body through greater balance and circulation of energies in the body. The therapy is similar to acupuncture and is practiced by applying pressure with the fingers, hand, palms, elbows, and knee to certain selected points on the body to regulate the internal flow of energy. Acupressure techniques is noninvasive, safe and effective.

Acupressure has been suggested to alleviate lower back pain, headaches, osteoarthritis pain, neck pain, musculoskeletal pain, pain before and after surgery, nausea-vomiting and sleep disturbance in patients.

Acupressure has implications for multi dimensional nursing practice. Therefore education of nurses about these therapies practicing in clinical setting is important. Nurses should use acupressure as a noninvasive, safe, and effective treatment modalities in their practices.

*Key Words: Acupressure therapy, nurse, patient*

### ÖZET

Akupressur vücuttaki enerjinin dolaşımı ve dengesi yoluyla, ağrı semptomları durumunda vücut yüzeyindeki farklı noktalar üzerine fiziksel basınç uygulanarak yapılan bir terapidir. Bu terapi akupunktura benzemektedir ve enerjinin iç akışını sağlamak için vücudun seçilmiş noktalarına parmaklar, el, avuç içi, el bileği ve diz ile basınç yapılarak gerçekleştirilir. Akupressur tekniği noninvasif, güvenli ve etkilidir.

Akupressurun hastalarda sırt, baş, osteoartrit, kas iskelet ve boyun ağrılarını, ameliyat öncesi ve sonrası ağrıyı, bulantı-kusmayı ve uyku rahatsızlığını hafiflettiği ileri sürülmektedir.

Akupressur çok yönlü hemşirelik uygulamasında önemlidir. Bu nedenle, klinik ortamda uygulanan bu terapiler hakkında hemşirelere eğitim verilmesi gerekir. Hemşireler uygulamalarında noninvasif, güvenli ve etkili bir tedavi modeli olarak akupressuru kullanabilmelidir.

*Anahtar Kelimeler: Akupressur terapi, hemşire, hasta*

## Introduction

Acupressure has been practiced in China for more than 2000 years, but is only recently beginning to gain acceptance by Western medical practitioners as a legitimate means of treating symptoms of illness (1, 2, 3). It is a very popular complementary therapy at present and plays an important role in multidisciplinary approach to the treatment and management of various symptoms (4, 5).

This therapy is a means of manipulating the same acupoints as used in acupuncture, but without the use of needles (6, 7). Acupressure is a noninvasive, safe and effective massage technique that employs pressure and massage to acupoints in order to stimulate the balance of life energy that in term promotes health and comfort (2, 8, 9). The therapy can be easily taught to patients so that they can manage fatigue, and decrease adverse health outcomes to improve their quality of life (5, 10, 11).

The purposes of acupressure are to regulate and balance the body energy or Chi, and further to maintain health, prevent illness or enhance health (12, 13). This energy referred to as Chi (14, 15). Chi flows through the 12 major energy pathways called meridians, each linked to specific internal organs system and 365-2000 acupoints (2, 11,16). Chi energy also regulate spiritual, emotional, mental and physical health (1).

Acupressure therapy is applied with the fingers on the acupoints and the stimulation lines or meridians of the body surface (7, 12, 17). The meridians start at the finger tips, connect to the brain, and then connect to the organ associated with the specific meridian (17).

These meridians can become blocked or slowed. Through applying pressure (acupressure) into one or more of these acupoints, imbalances can be corrected by stimulating or easing energy flow (14, 15).

Each meridian is classified according to the specific organ to which it is associated. For example, the heart meridian is connected to the heart; the lung meridian is connected to the lungs (18).

## Application of Acupressure

Acupressure is a type of stimulation of the body's acupuncture points by applying pressure using hands, fingers, palms, elbows, knees, thumbs or acustimulations bands more commonly known as Sea-Bands (Relief Bands or Wrist Bands) (1, 4, 9, 10, 14, 19). Sea -bands are bands or elasticated fabric with a small round plastic button inside the band. They are designed to be worn on both wrists (8).

The most commonly two acupoints used in acupressure are Pericardium 6 (P6 or Neiguan) and Stomach 36 (ST36 or Zusanli). Pericardium 6 is situated bilaterally on the pericardium meridian. This is located on the anterior surface of the forearm, approximately three finger widths from the first wrist crease. The ST36 point is located bilaterally on the stomach meridian approximately for finger widths below the knee and one finger width lateral to the tibia (6, 7, 14, 20).

Pressure on the Neiguan point, also called P6 or pericardial median, rebalances the

energy life force or Chi when balance between the negative and positive energies (the Yin and the Yang) is achieved (8). According to the theory of Yin and Yang, life takes place in the alternating rhythm of Yin and Yang (10).

Acupressure should never be applied directly to wounds, bruises or sprains since strong finger pressure may increase pain and tissue damage. However, you can gently press points near the site of injury to increase circulation and release muscular tension (4).

## The Effects of Acupressure

There are a number of theories as to how acupressure works. First, acupressure alters brain chemistry by affecting the release of neurotransmitters and neurohormones. Second, it activates opioid systems, which is believed to account for the well-proven effects of these methods on pain. Third, it speeds up the transmission of electromagnetic signals that may activate the flow of endorphins and monoamines, and in turn, reduce levels of agitation and nausea (10, 16).

Acupressure acts to dilate capillaries and accelerate (enhance) blood circulation locally; promote the flow of venous blood and lymphatic fluid back to the heart; increase erythrocyte counts and the level of leucocytes in the blood; strengthen an individual's immunity; promote supple joint; stimulate large areas of nerve fiber by touch, pressing and rubbing to further activate substantia gelatinosa and influence the activities of T-cells that lead to less stimulation of cerebrum by pain and alleviate individual's pain; and finally, stimulate the arcuate nucleus of the thalamus to secrete endorphins (4, 12).

## The Benefits of Acupressure

Acupressure restores the body's energy flow and facilitates the healing process. It also improves blood flow and circulation so that oxygen can be carried more effectively to all parts of the body, increases energy and boosts the immune system (4).

Acupressure has been found to alleviate lower back pain, headaches, osteoarthritis pain, neck pain, musculoskeletal pain, menstrual pain, dental pain, fibromyalgia pain, pain before and after surgery, stomach pain and indigestion, other conditions with chronic pain (1, 2, 4,16).

Acupressure has been used to improve the quality of sleep and to reduce fatigue, to prevent postoperative and chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting (2, 11, 16, 21). It also alleviates the depression symptoms in hemodialysis patients (12, 17).

Acupressure therapy can decrease sympathetic stimulation, promote relaxation and improve perceived symptoms of dyspnoea, anxiety and reduce physiological indicators of heart rates and respiratory rates in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease who are using prolonged mechanical ventilation (5, 9).

## Implication for Nursing

Acupressure included in Nursing Interventions Classification (NIC) is defined as “Application of firm, sustained pressure to special points on the body to decrease pain, produce relaxation, and prevent or reduce nausea” (22). It has been known that acupressure intervention is useful in decreasing of the problems such pain, nausea, vomiting and fatigue experienced by patients.

Acupressure has implications for comprehensive nursing practice. These are;

- Providing nursing professionals with research-based nursing intervention and enhancement of independent nursing function
- Demonstrating the efficacy of acupressure and promoting a clinical application of a culturally based nursing intervention
- Through finger-pressing an improvement in patient- nurse relationship is expected
- Offering a nonpharmacological method for prevention or treatment of post-operative nausea and vomiting, post-operative pain, neck pain, osteoarthritis pain, headaches (23).

Educating nurses about these therapies is important. Nurses can use acupressure as noninvasive, safe, well-studied, and effective treatment modalities in their practice (13). Acupressure can incorporate as an advanced clinical preparation for nurses and a program for continuing education.

Nursing managers should establish the policies or protocols that involve acupressure therapy as a standard of care for patients in wards (5).

Consequently, it is thought that acupressure intervention will decrease such symptoms experienced by patients and increase the quality of life.

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