

Alternative Therapy Helps Pre-Op Anxiety, Post-Op Results

A new study conducted at the University of Haifa, Israel suggests that a combination of complementary medicine with standard care for preoperative anxiety reduces anxiety levels among patients. In the current study, the researchers sought to examine whether complementary medicine practices, applied alongside conventional care, could help reduce anxiety levels.

The study examined 360 patients over the age of 16 about to undergo elective or acute surgery in the general surgery ward. The patients were divided into three groups. The first group received standard care for preoperative anxiety, including anti-anxiety drugs according to the anaesthesiologist's instructions 120-160 minutes before entering the surgical waiting room. The second group received standard care as well as complementary medical care, including one of the following therapeutic means: acupuncture, reflexology, individual guided imagery, or a combination of reflexology and guided imagery. The third group received standard care combined with generic guided imagery, provided in the form of a recording for the patient. The anxiety levels were measured on a scale of 1 to 10, before and after the intervention scores of 4 and above constituted an intermediate or higher anxiety level.

The results of the study showed that, patients who received the combination of complementary medicine and standard care showed a reduction of 60 percent in their anxiety level, from a mean score



of 5.54 to 2.32, representing a reduction from intermediate-high anxiety level to low anxiety level. By contrast, standard care alone actually caused the average anxiety level to slightly rise from 4.92 to 5.44, and 70 percent of patients in this group continued to report intermediate to high anxiety even after receiving medication. The study findings also showed that the greatest reduction in anxiety was achieved when patients received a combination of standard care together with reflexology and guided imagery. The group of patients that received a combination of standard care and generic guided imagery, without intervention by a caregiver, showed a reduction in preoperative anxiety level from an average of 4.9 to 3.5. In this study, we showed that complementary treatments are helpful in the context of preoperative anxiety," the researchers conclude.

Exercise for Fall Prevention in Parkinson Disease

For a person with Parkinson's, even the simplest of tasks can cause the brain to short-circuit. The signals get crossed, and without quite being able to explain how it happens, they fall over. "You are at more risk of falling if you have already had a fall. That's why it's important to take falls seriously, particularly at an early stage of the disease," says researcher and special physiotherapist Ylva Hivand Hiorth of Stavanger University Hospital, Norway. The researchers were surprised that as



many as 25 percent of recently diagnosed patients suffered a fall in the first year. Their expectations were more consistent with the statistic that over 70 percent of patients who had lived with the disease for 16 years suffered falls.

Around one percent of the population over the age of 60 has Parkinson's. In the population over the age of 70, the figure rises to four percent. The disease becomes more common as we get older. Most people who are diagnosed

are over the age of 55. "That's why it's extremely important to know how best to meet the challenges presented by Parkinson's disease, both for the patients and for the community," says Hiorth. She believes that exercise could be important, possibly combined with new medicines. One study shows that tai chi could be achieving good results in pre-

venting falls in people with Parkinson's disease. Exercises that strengthen lower limbs can also help, as can balance exercises. "If we manage to prevent early falls, this will give patients living with Parkinson's a better life and the confidence to stay as active as possible," says Ylva Hivand Hiorth.

Study Finds Tai Chi Improves Brain Metabolism and Muscle Energetics in Older Adults

A new study provides insights into the biochemical mechanisms by which tai chi may provide both physical and psychological benefits. The study was published in the new *Journal of Neuroimaging*.

Using magnetic resonance spectroscopy, a non-invasive method of measuring brain and muscle chemistry using MRI machines, tests conducted in 6 older



adults enrolled in a 12-week tai chi program revealed significant increases in a marker of neuronal health in the brain and sig-

nificantly improved recovery rates of a metabolite involved in energy production in leg muscles. "The benefits of tai chi have been well known anecdotally; however recent research such as our study can quantify these improvements using objective measures," said senior author Dr. Alexander Lin, of Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School.

Study Shows Acupressure Relieves Long-Term Symptoms of Breast Cancer Treatment

A new study finds acupressure as low-cost, at-home solution to the side effects that linger after breast cancer treatment ends. Researchers from the University of Michigan Rogel Cancer Center, USA reported that acupressure helped reduce fatigue in breast cancer survivors. Results are published in *JNCI Cancer Spectrum*.

In the new study, they looked at the impact of acupressure on symptoms that frequently accompany fatigue in this population: chronic pain, anxiety, depression and poor sleep. They found acupressure improved all of these symptoms compared with standard care.

In the study, breast cancer survivors who reported fatigue were randomized to one of two types of acupressure or to usual care, which included typical sleep-management techniques. The women were taught to find



and stimulate the acupressure points so that they could perform it at home once per day for six weeks. The new analysis focused on the 288 patients who reported symptoms in addition to fatigue. They were asked weekly about fatigue, sleep quality, depressive symptoms, anxiety and pain.

Researchers tested two types of acupressure: relaxing acupressure and stimulating acupressure, which is used to increase energy. After six weeks, relaxing acupressure was significantly

better than stimulating acupressure or standard care at improving depressive symptoms and sleep. Both types of acupressure were more effective than standard care for improving anxiety, severity of pain and pain interfering with daily life. The researchers also assessed whether improving one symptom helped improve other symptoms. They found that improving symptoms of depression improved sleep quality, accounting for about 20 percent of the improvement in fatigue.

Chair Yoga More Effective than Music Therapy in Older Adults with Advanced Dementia

Researchers from Florida Atlantic University conducted a pilot study that is a randomized controlled trial to examine the effects of chair yoga on older adults with moderate to severe dementia, who are unable to participate in regular exercise or standing yoga due to cognitive impairment, problems with balance, or fear of falling. The aim of the study was to assess the likelihood of these individuals' ability to participate in non-pharmacological interventions as well as demonstrate the safety and effects of chair yoga on older adults with all levels of dementia.

For the study, published in the *American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease & Other Dementias*, researchers compared chair yoga with two other types of non-pharmacological interventions: chair-based exercise and music intervention. Participants in each of the three groups attended 45-minute sessions twice a week for 12 weeks. Researchers collected data at baseline, after six weeks and 12-week intervention.

Results showed that participants with moderate-to-severe dementia could safely adhere to non-pharmacological interventions. Study findings showed that the chair yoga group improved significantly in quality of life compared to the music intervention group. Both the chair yoga and chair-exercise groups showed improvement over time, while the music intervention group declined. In addition, both the chair yoga and chair-based exercise groups showed lower depression across all



three time points when compared to the music intervention group. Researchers examined the effects of chair yoga on physical function, including balance and mobility, and compared the effects with chair-based exercise and music intervention. Chair yoga provides a safe environment for stretching, strengthening and flexibility while decreasing the risk of falls by using a chair. It also provides important breathing and relaxation techniques utilizing stationary poses that use isometric contraction and guided relaxation of various muscle groups.

"We think that the physical poses we used in the chair yoga and chair-based exercise groups were an important factor in improving quality of life for the participants in our study," said Juyoung Park, Ph.D., lead author and an associate professor in the Phyllis and Harvey Sandler School of Social Work within FAU's College for Design and Social Inquiry.

Put Sleep Disorders to Bed with Acupuncture

A clinical trial study conducted by researchers at Zhejiang Chinese Medical University found acupuncture to be more effective than certain drugs types similar to those routinely prescribed for the treatment of insomnia.

The sample size of both the trials were small, however both trials indicated that acupuncture as an effective treatment for insomnia. The average age of the clinical subjects was around 50 - 53 years of age. Patients in the treatment group underwent a combination of conventional body style acupuncture and auriculotherapy to activate important points in the ear area.

Not only did acupuncture help with better sleep but also addressed the symptoms of insomnia.

Traditional acupuncture utilized tiny needles



to access distinct points on the body to restore balance, alleviate pain, enhance sleep, and improve overall well-being. After one session, many noticed better sleep that same night, reduced stress, and a feeling of calm and well-being.