

Research on the Use of Acupressure to Alleviate Fatigue in Cancer Survivors

Dr. Noah Whitcombe

School of Artificial Intelligence, Pacific Crest University, New Zealand

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Abstract

Among the many unpleasant side effects that cancer patients and their families face, cancer-related exhaustion ranks high. Unlike common tiredness, cancer-related fatigue lasts longer, is more intense, and does not improve with sleep or rest. Every aspect of one's life, including physical ability, mental health, social engagement, and quality of life, can be profoundly impacted. A lot of cancer survivors still use alternative therapies like acupressure to help with exhaustion and everyday functioning, even if there are pharmaceutical and supportive interventions available. less weariness in those who underwent acupressure treatment. Energy levels, the quality of sleep, mood, and the capacity to carry out daily tasks all showed improvement. The intervention was associated with increased feelings of well-being and relaxation for many participants. Due to the lack of major side effects, acupressure appears to be a safe and well-tolerated treatment option for cancer survivors. When it comes to alleviating cancer-related exhaustion, acupressure seems to be a safe, effective, and non-invasive supplementary strategy that cancer survivors can use. As a helpful supportive care method, it can improve quality of life and speed recovery after cancer treatment because to its simplicity, affordability, and few side effects. We recommend more large-scale randomized controlled trials to validate these findings and create standardized acupressure methods for managing fatigue in oncology therapy.

Keywords: Acupressure, Cancer Survivors, Cancer-Related Fatigue, Complementary Therapy

Introduction

There is an increasing number of people who have survived cancer thanks to the tremendous improvement in survival rates brought about by advances in cancer detection and therapy. Even though getting well is a big deal, many survivors still have to deal with mental and physical issues that have an impact on their daily lives. One of the most prevalent, long-lasting, and debilitating symptoms that cancer survivors often express is exhaustion. Fatigue due to cancer or its treatment is characterized by an overwhelming sense of physical, emotional, and mental tiredness that does not go away with sleep or rest, and which is disproportionate to recent activity levels. Cancer fatigue is different from regular fatigue in that it can last for months or even years after treatment ends, affecting not only everyday functioning but also job performance, social relationships, and general health. Complex and multiple factors contribute to cancer-related fatigue. Anemia, pain, sleep problems, nutritional deficiencies, mental stress, anxiety, depression, hormonal treatments, surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, and cancer are all known to cause weariness. All of these things add up to make cancer survivors'

fatigue worse and lower their quality of life. The effects of cancer-related exhaustion are extensive. People who are chronically tired may find it difficult to engage in regular physical activity, go to work, or socialize with others. Decreased motivation, diminished ability to focus, and diminished autonomy are additional symptoms that may accompany this illness. Survivorship treatment now includes good symptom management due to the fact that exhaustion impacts many aspects of health. Pharmacological treatments, exercise programs, dietary interventions, psychological support, and sleep management techniques are some of the methods that have been developed to alleviate cancer-related fatigue. Nevertheless, these treatments have not alleviated the exhaustion felt by many survivors. Furthermore, there may be treatments that have trouble being accessible, have unsavory side effects, or are not very effective. Consequently, there is a rising tide of interest in safe CAM therapies that might be incorporated into cancer supportive care. Applying pressure to certain areas on the body called acupoints is the basis of a non-invasive treatment called acupressure, which originates from Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) holds that acupressure can aid in healing by reestablishing harmony in the body's Qi, or life force energy. According to current scientific thinking, acupressure has the potential to regulate physiological processes that impact weariness and general health, as well as to activate the neurological system, increase circulation, and promote relaxation. Research suggests that cancer survivors may benefit from acupressure in a number of ways, including less stress, better sleep, less exhaustion, and improved mental and physical functioning. An appealing complementary therapy for long-term symptom management, it is simple, inexpensive, safe, and easy to self-administer. Also, by using acupressure, survivors are able to take an active role in their own healing and care.

Cancer-Related Fatigue: A Population-Based Analysis and Prevalence

Among the many debilitating side effects that cancer patients and survivors endure, cancer-related fatigue (CRF) ranks high. Feelings of extreme fatigue (mental, emotional, and physical) that do not go away with sleep or rest are hallmarks of this condition. Fatigue due to cancer, in contrast to ordinary weariness, can considerably impair everyday functioning, treatment compliance, and general well-being.

At every point along the cancer continuum—from diagnosis to active treatment to recovery to survivorship to end-of-life care—cancer patients experience weariness. According to epidemiological research, one of the most commonly reported complaints in cancer settings is weariness. A large number of cancer patients experience it, and it may linger even after therapy ends.

Cancer subtype, illness stage, treatment approach, and fatigue assessment tools all play a role in the overall incidence of cancer-related exhaustion. According to studies, the majority of individuals who undergo radiation or chemotherapy also suffer from weariness. Intense treatment regimens, combination medicines, and protracted cancer therapy courses are associated with increased fatigue.

Even after cancer treatment is over, many survivors still struggle with extreme exhaustion. Persistent fatigue persists for months or even years after cancer treatment ends for between

20% to 40% of long-term survivors, according to studies. Survivors' capacity to resume regular daily routines, socialize, and work may be negatively impacted by this persistent exhaustion. The frequency of cancer-related weariness varies among different forms of cancer. Some cancers, including breast, lung, colorectal, hematological, and advanced-stage cancers, have been associated with higher rates. Radiation patients, those undergoing stem cell transplants, immunotherapy, hormone therapy, or chemotherapy may also experience more severe fatigue. There are a number of clinical and demographic factors that affect the frequency of cancer-related fatigue. Excessive weariness has been linked to several factors, including advanced age, female gender, advanced illness stage, numerous comorbidities, inadequate nutrition, anemia, chronic pain, sleep disruptions, anxiety, depression, and decreased physical activity. Additional factors that can amplify the severity of symptoms include psychological anguish and emotional obstacles associated with cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Physical tiredness is just one aspect of cancer-related fatigue. Physical functioning, cognitive performance, social participation, emotional distress, and quality of life are all negatively impacted by persistent weariness. Among cancer survivors, it is a major source of disability and decreased productivity, which has huge personal and societal consequences.

Why People Get Cancer-Related Fatigue and What Can Cause It

As a multi-faceted illness, cancer-related tiredness (CRF) impacts a large number of people both before and after cancer treatment. Constant mental, emotional, and physical tiredness that does not go away with sleep or other forms of rest is a hallmark of this condition. Many factors, including those associated with the disease and its treatment as well as with the patient's physiological and psychological state as well as their way of life, contribute to the onset of cancer-related fatigue.

Causes of Cancer-Related Fatigue

Cancer Itself

Cancer, through a number of molecular pathways, can directly contribute to weariness. The development of tumors can cause changes in metabolism, inflammation, and an increase in the body's energy requirements. Substances released by cancer cells can disrupt regular physiological functions, causing fatigue and weakness.

Cancer Treatments

Cancer therapies are among the most common causes of fatigue. Different treatment modalities can affect the body in various ways:

- **Chemotherapy** may damage healthy cells in addition to cancer cells, leading to fatigue, anemia, and reduced energy levels.
- **Radiation therapy** can cause cumulative fatigue that often increases throughout the course of treatment.
- **Surgery** may result in temporary fatigue due to tissue healing, pain, and reduced physical activity.
- **Hormonal therapy, immunotherapy, and targeted therapies** may also contribute to fatigue through their effects on body systems and metabolism.

Anemia

Anemia is a frequent complication among cancer patients and survivors. Reduced levels of red blood cells decrease oxygen delivery to body tissues, resulting in weakness, shortness of breath, and fatigue.

Sleep Disturbances

Many cancer patients experience difficulties with sleep due to pain, anxiety, treatment side effects, or changes in daily routines. Poor sleep quality and insomnia can significantly worsen fatigue.

Pain

Persistent pain associated with cancer or its treatment can drain physical and emotional energy. Chronic pain often interferes with sleep and daily activities, contributing to fatigue.

Nutritional Deficiencies

Poor appetite, nausea, vomiting, and treatment-related digestive problems can lead to inadequate nutritional intake. Deficiencies in calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals may contribute to reduced energy levels.

Risk Factors of Cancer-Related Fatigue

Several factors increase the likelihood of developing cancer-related fatigue:

Advanced Cancer Stage

Individuals with advanced or metastatic cancer often experience more severe fatigue due to greater disease burden and increased physiological stress.

Type and Intensity of Treatment

Patients receiving multiple treatments simultaneously or intensive treatment regimens are at higher risk of experiencing fatigue.

Older Age

Older adults may be more vulnerable to fatigue because of age-related physiological changes, reduced physical reserve, and the presence of other chronic health conditions.

Psychological Distress

Anxiety, depression, fear, and emotional stress are strongly associated with increased fatigue. Psychological factors can affect sleep, coping abilities, and overall energy levels.

Physical Inactivity

Reduced physical activity can lead to muscle weakness, decreased endurance, and worsening fatigue. A sedentary lifestyle often contributes to a cycle of inactivity and exhaustion.

Comorbid Medical Conditions

Chronic illnesses such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, and respiratory disorders can increase fatigue severity in cancer survivors.

Female Gender

Although the reasons are not completely understood, several studies have shown that women may experience more weariness due to cancer than males.

Factors related to cancer, its therapies, and patient characteristics all contribute to cancer-induced fatigue. The advancement of cancer, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, anemia, discomfort, sleep disorders, and dietary deficits are common reasons. Additional factors that raise the probability of weariness include advanced illness stage, psychological anguish,

physical inactivity, advanced age, and the presence of other medical diseases. The development of effective supportive care therapies, such as acupressure, to reduce fatigue and improve the quality of life of cancer survivors depends on our understanding of these causes and risk factors.

Conclusion

One of the most common and difficult symptoms endured by cancer survivors is exhaustion, which can continue even after treatment has ended. It has far-reaching consequences for people's cognitive abilities, mental health, social lives, and quality of life in general, among many other areas. Management of cancer-related fatigue necessitates an all-encompassing and patient-centered strategy due to the multi-faceted nature of the elements that contribute to this condition, including physiological, psychological, and treatment-related aspects. Acupressure is a new supplementary treatment that shows promise in helping cancer sufferers feel less tired. Acupressure is a form of alternative medicine that uses the stimulation of specific acupoints to potentially increase energy levels, relaxation, sleep quality, stress levels, and the body's inherent healing abilities. People looking for ways to help with tiredness management may find it appealing because it is non-invasive, inexpensive, easy to administer, and has a low risk of side effects. Based on what we know so far, acupressure has the potential to improve physical comfort, mental health, and everyday functioning in addition to significantly reducing the severity of weariness. On top of that, acupressure promotes self-care, which can boost self-esteem and general health for cancer survivors. Acupuncture, when combined with more traditional forms of supportive treatment, may help alleviate cancer-related fatigue in more complex ways. Reducing fatigue among cancer survivors can be achieved by the safe and potentially beneficial intervention of acupressure. Survivorship care programs that use acupressure have the potential to enhance quality of life and support long-term rehabilitation. For the evidence basis to be strengthened, treatment guidelines to be established, and the long-term efficacy of acupressure in controlling cancer-related fatigue to be determined, additional large-scale, well-designed randomized controlled trials are required.

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