

SHIATSU AND CANCER

As with many other complementary therapies a major benefit for people affected by cancer is having time to talk, be listened to and heard in a safe environment. The shiatsu practitioner is trained to relate to people as individuals and assess their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs – essential in recovery from cancer. The power of touch used in shiatsu should never be underestimated.

Shiatsu can offer valuable support from the point of diagnosis, immediately after surgery and throughout radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Once treatment is finished, shiatsu sessions can aid recovery, help to renew energy and motivate people to take responsibility for their wellbeing.

Shiatsu offers a drug free solution to reduce side effects such as pain, nausea and lethargy associated with surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy and may help to reduce hot flushes in hormone therapy.

Shiatsu restores and balances energy levels and triggers the relaxation response easing stress and tension in the body and mind and encouraging restful sleep.

Shiatsu facilitates emotional release without the need to ask searching questions, helping to reduce levels of fear and anxiety, dissipate anger and frustration and assist the grieving process.

Shiatsu moves the lymph helping to minimise the risk of lymphoedema.

Shiatsu assists with the detoxification process.

Shiatsu helps to restore hormonal balance in hormone related cancers

Shiatsu encourages correct posture, breathing, stretching and exercise

Shiatsu may help to boost the immune response

Shiatsu improves circulation and enhances wellbeing

Shiatsu awakens the spirit and inspires hope for the future.

Shiatsu helps people to get back in control, encourages self management and empowers people to take responsibility for their healing and well-being, thereby improving their quality of life.

Shiatsu is offered to people affected by cancer at many specialised centres including the Sheffield and Rotherham Cavendish Cancer Centres and Bristol Cancer Centre.

Bristol Cancer Help Centre

Bristol Cancer Help Centre, described as “representing the gold star standard for complementary care in cancer” by Professor Karol Sikora, Director of Cancer Services for the World Health Organisation, has had a Shiatsu practitioner in its Therapy Team for over 10 years.

Thea Bailey, MRSS(T), has, literally, handled hundreds of cancer patients, not only from the UK but across the world. Thea explains: “Shiatsu allows someone to feel a genuine sense of support, to relax more deeply, to gain greater awareness of their breathing and thus greater ability to release tensions, causing relief around sites of deep pain. When the mind, body and spirit is in a more harmonious state then, as we all know, the body’s own healing potential has far greater capacity to become even more effective.”

Thea sees patient’s improvements manifesting not only in their physical health but in their increased ability to make important decisions. Patients realise the benefits of the Shiatsu and often report this back to their GP’s and oncologists. Thea says “the relief which gentle Shiatsu enables is profound. Patients can create an additional supportive care network, and it is now recognised how positive such relaxing and stress relieving effects of Shiatsu are, in conjunction with other ongoing treatments.”

As part of the Centre and Exeter University's MA course in Complementary Health Studies, Thea has been teaching students about touch and cancer. She also has contact with medical students at Bristol University, informing them about the role complementary therapies can have in cancer care. Doctors, nurses and midwives have all come to Thea as clients in her private practice. She says they have come to respect the brilliant way that working through touch, helping connect someone to their whole self, can lead to improved health and well-being – thereby playing a huge part in someone's recovery.

Thea is passionate about the work she does, explaining "For me this is vitally important work about the way we connect with our patients, and how we can use touch safely and therapeutically. Shiatsu is safe and highly effective for patients in critical states of health."

UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

Press release - April 15, 2009

Buxton Students Give Free Alternative Care to Cancer Patients

Cancer patients have spoken of their delight at a new partnership between the University of Derby and a local hospice giving them free complementary therapy.

Having completed specialist training, spa managers and assessors at the University of Derby Buxton, have taught students how to deliver therapies, including massage, manicures, pedicures and spa treatments, to cancer patients and carers associated with Blythe House Hospice, in Chapel en le Frith.

Clients from the hospice have already started noticing the benefits.

Lynn Ashton, 60, from Disley in Cheshire was first diagnosed with (an early stage) breast tumour in 2004. An operation removed a tumour but a second tumour was found in 2007. Lynn said that she thought the new scheme was invaluable.

She said: "Many people who've been through massive trauma don't realise they need support. Blythe House helped me understand that I was running on empty and needed to look after myself. I feel physically and emotionally recharged after a session in the spa. Something as simple as a massage can make the world of difference."

The treatments being offered are aimed to help people cope with the effects of their illness and the side-effects of their treatments.

Anne Cawthorn from the Living Well Centre at Blythe House said: "Historically people diagnosed with cancer were not offered this kind of support but we believe that alongside traditional medicine, alternative treatments can have positive effects.

"Living with cancer can be very stressful and receiving a treatment can help to reduce anxiety levels, or simply allow the person to feel pampered."

Twelve spa managers and staff have received the specialised training and now offer the free treatments at the beautifully refurbished Devonshire Spa at the University of Derby Buxton or at the Living Well Centre at Blythe House Hospice in Chapel en le Frith in the High Peak.

Some of Buxton's final year BSc International Spa Management students were involved in the training therefore educating the spa managers of the future, and continuing the education of the industry as a whole.

Nadine McNamara, 30, a Level 2 NVQ Beauty Therapy student, said: "This scheme is providing us with an incredible learning experience. It's important for us to experience working with different client groups and to assess and deliver treatments whilst responding to the particular needs of the client.

"What we are offering is something that can help people feel better when they may be at a very low point in their lives. It's incredibly rewarding for me as a therapist."

Debbie Lees, 50, from Glossop, in Derbyshire, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2002. She had an initial operation to remove a tumor in early 2003 and since then has had surgery a further 11 times.

She said: "Support for people with cancer has moved on so much since 2002 and it's thanks to partnerships like this one.

"Cancer can have a devastating effect on a person's identity and breast cancer in particular can wreck a woman's sense of her own femininity. The treatments we're receiving help to restore those important feelings."

Dr Peter Mackereth, Reader in Integrated Health at the University of Derby, said: "It is really important that we prepare our students to work in the real world, where one in three people will be diagnosed with cancer during their lifetime. The specialist training provided information about cancer and its treatments – students were also shown how to adapt their treatments so that therapies can be given safely and sensitively."

Amanda Garrington, Operations Co-ordinator at The Devonshire Spa said: "The service we provide is a gift given to the carers and patients of this incredible organisation who all work so hard to provide a sanctuary of support for our local community."

Blythe House, Chapel-en-le-Frith, offers free, individualised, holistic care and support for anyone in the High Peak living with cancer or other serious, life threatening illness.

The partnership is also supported by The Christie NHS Foundation Trust in Manchester, where Peter Mackereth is Clinical Lead for Complementary Therapies. The Christie Trust is a specialist NHS cancer centre offering high-quality diagnosis, treatment and care for cancer patients, and world-class research education in all aspects of cancer.

For more information about the Living Well Services contact Blythe House on 01298 815388. For further media information please contact Annabel Harvey – Press and PR Officer at the University of Derby, 01332 593004, a.harvey@derby.ac.uk. For media information please contact the University's Press Office Administration Assistant Anne Wake on 01332 591

RESEARCH:

Thwaite J. Complementary Therapies: a patient's choice. *Complementary Therapies in Nursing & Midwifery*. 2(3):68-70, 1996.

An anecdotal account by a patient (Judith Thwaite) relating how a variety of complementary therapies helped her cope in her conventional medical treatment for non-Hodgkins lymphoma. In the abstract the author says that she visited the Royal Homeopathic Hospital, London, regularly for massage, Shiatsu, acupuncture and reflexology.

Collins KB, Thomas DJ. *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners*, Feb 2004; Vol. 16 (2):76-80.

The aim of this review was to evaluate existing research into the use of acupuncture and acupressure (Shiatsu incorporates acupressure) in the management of chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting in order to give nurse practitioners the information needed to provide the best care for their patients.

Results: Used in conjunction with current antiemetic drugs, acupuncture and acupressure have been shown to be safe and effective for the relief of nausea and vomiting resulting from chemotherapy. (Even with the best antiemetic pharmacological agents, 60% of cancer patients experience nausea and vomiting when undergoing chemotherapy treatments).

Acupressure (Shiatsu incorporates acupressure) for nausea and vomiting in cancer patients receiving chemotherapy.

Klein J, Griffiths P. St Mary's Hospital, London, UK. joan.klein@st-marys.nhs.uk

Practitioners working with patients undergoing chemotherapy regularly encourage them to use acupressure in the form of Sea Bands for the relief of treatment-related nausea and vomiting. This mini-review sets out to uncover and examine the evidence base for this recommendation. A mini systematic review was carried out to identify randomized controlled trials comparing the use of acupressure plus usual care with usual care alone. The population was adult patients receiving cancer chemotherapy. The outcome was nausea or vomiting duration or intensity. Searches on Medline, Embase, AMED, the Cochrane Library, Cancerlit and Cinahl identified two randomized controlled trials involving 482 patients with compared acupressure to no intervention control. The results suggest that acupressure may decrease nausea among patients undergoing chemotherapy but further work is required before conclusively advising patients on the efficacy of acupressure in preventing and treating chemotherapy-induced nausea.

Publication Types: [Review](#). PMID: 15389150 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE].

Effect of acupressure (Shiatsu incorporates acupressure) on nausea and vomiting during chemotherapy cycle for Korean postoperative stomach cancer patients.

Shin YH, Kim TL, Shin MS, Juon HS. Keimyung University, Dongsan-dong, Jung-gu, Daegu, Korea. Cancer Nurs. 2004 Jul-Aug;27(4):267-74.

Despite the development of effective antiemetic drugs, nausea and vomiting remain the main side effects associated with cancer chemotherapy. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of acupressure on emesis control in postoperative gastric cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy. Forty postoperative gastric cancer patients receiving the first cycle of chemotherapy with cisplatin and 5-Fluorouracil were divided into control and intervention groups (n = 20 each). Both groups received regular antiemesis medication; however, the intervention group received acupressure training and was instructed to perform the finger acupressure maneuver for 5 minutes on P6 (Nei-Guan) point located at 3-finger widths up from the first palmar crease, between palmaris longus and flexor carpi radialis tendons point, at least 3 times a day before chemotherapy and mealtimes or based on their needs. Both groups received equally frequent nursing visits and consultations, and reported nausea and vomiting using Rhode's Index of Nausea, Vomiting and Retching. We found

significant differences between intervention and control groups in the severity of nausea and vomiting, the duration of nausea, and frequency of vomiting. This study suggests that acupressure on P6 point appears to be an effective adjunct maneuver in the course of emesis control.

Publication Types: [Clinical Trial](#), [Controlled Clinical Trial](#), [Multicenter Study](#)
PMID: 15292721 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE].

Acupressure (Shiatsu incorporates acupressure) for nausea: results of a pilot study.

[Dibble SL](#), [Chapman J](#), [Mack KA](#), [Shih AS](#). *Institute for Health and Aging, University of California, San Francisco, USA. sdibble@itsa.ucsf.edu. [Oncol Nurs Forum](#). 2000 Jan-Feb;27(1):41-7.*

PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES: To compare differences in nausea experience and intensity in women undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer between those receiving usual care plus acupressure training and treatment and those receiving only usual care. **DESIGN:** Single-cycle, randomized clinical trial. **SETTING:** Outpatient oncology clinic in a major teaching medical center and a private outpatient oncology practice. **SAMPLE:** Seventeen women participated in the study. The typical participant was 49.5 years old (SD = 6.0), Caucasian (59%), not married/partnered (76%), on disability (53%), born a U.S. citizen (76%), and heterosexual (88%); lived alone (59%); had at least graduated from high school (100%); and had an annual personal income of \$50,000 or greater (65%). **METHODS:** The intervention included finger acupressure bilaterally at P6 and ST36, acupressure points located on the forearm and by the knee. Baseline and poststudy questionnaires plus a daily log were used to collect data. **MAIN RESEARCH VARIABLES:** Nausea experience measured by the Rhodes inventory of Nausea, Vomiting, and Retching and nausea intensity. **FINDINGS:** Significant differences existed between the two groups in regard to nausea experience ($p < 0.01$) and nausea intensity ($p < 0.04$) during the first 10 days of the chemotherapy cycle, with the acupressure group reporting less intensity and experience of nausea.

CONCLUSIONS: Finger acupressure may decrease nausea among women undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING PRACTICE: This study must be replicated prior to advising patients about the efficacy of acupressure for the treatment of nausea.

Publication Types: [Clinical Trial](#) & [Randomized Controlled Trial](#)
PMID: 10660922 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

Using acupuncture and acupressure (Shiatsu incorporates acupressure) to treat postoperative emesis.

[Mann E](#). [Prof Nurse](#). 1999 Jul;14(10):691-4. *Poole Hospital (NHS) Trust.*

Interest in non-pharmacological strategies to manage health-care problems is increasing. Effective treatment for postoperative nausea and vomiting continues to be elusive, despite the introduction of new anti-emetic drugs. Acupuncture and acupressure might offer an effective, safe, simple and cheap therapy.

Publication Types: [Review](#). PMID: 10481718 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

ARTICLES

The Role of Shiatsu in the Treatment of the Side-Effects of Chemotherapy

By Dominique Chevalier translated by Chris Atkinson MRSS

In 2004, Dominique, a trained Physiotherapist, was working as part of a Palliative Care team in the hospital service of Saintes in South-West France. During this time, he was also in his final year of Shiatsu training. This extract of his study into the effectiveness of Shiatsu in helping cancer patients overcome side-effects of chemotherapy was carried out as part of his final year assessment.

Thanks to the open-mindedness of the doctors in his department, he was given the opportunity, very rare in France, of treating existing hospital patients with Shiatsu. Patients were referred by the doctors of the Department of Oncology, who also supervised the study. The patients received the Shiatsu free of charge, and the treatments were carried out as part of the normal routine of the Department.

Chris Atkinson

My starting point for this study was an article by De. Koster-Vidal which included the following:

“I discovered the existence of Shiatsu through one of my patients undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer. I was surprised by her general state of health, the absence of side effects and the speed of recuperation after her chemotherapy sessions (only one day of tiredness). She said “In fact, Doctor, I don’t know if I ought to tell you, but before and after my chemotherapy, I am having Shiatsu treatments”. Since then, I have had the opportunity to observe the effects of this discipline on other patients”.

This prompted me to think about bringing together my study of Shiatsu and my own professional practice in caring for cancer patients.

Could Shiatsu be a useful aid in diminishing the side-effects of chemotherapy? And if so, how could the outcome be evaluated?

The study was carried out from September 2004 to May 2005 with 16 patients in the care of the Oncology Department of the Hospital of Saintes in Southwest France. None of the patients knew Shiatsu and each patient had already received 3 chemotherapy treatments. All of them had experienced post-chemotherapy side effects, of which the most frequent were:

- Physical fatigue
- Nausea
- Hair loss
- Psychological fatigue
- Vomiting
- Problems with the mouth
- Constipation
- Skin problems and sensations of tingling.

It was during consultations with certain patients concerning their experience of side-effects that the Oncologist proposed a series of Shiatsu treatments, as an additional part of their treatment in hospital.

The first appointment took the form of a general explanation of Shiatsu, an outline of what would happen during the session, and what possible effects could be expected. The patient was given a written summary of the method, specifying that the Shiatsu sessions were intended as a complement to the existing medical treatment and in no way a replacement. In addition, the patient was asked to sign a Form of Consent.

Before each Shiatsu treatment, the patient was asked to evaluate their experience of side-effects after chemotherapy. For each specific symptom, the following criteria were noted:

- The onset of the symptom, its duration and intensity, and any other relevant comments.
- The intensity of the discomfort was noted on a scale of 1 to 10 (0 = no discomfort 10 = maximum discomfort).

The Shiatsu sessions took place as soon as possible following the chemotherapy, as this gave the best opportunity for the collection of statistics. Individual case notes were taken and a synthesis of symptoms was established for each patient.

In treatment two Meridians were frequently found to be significant: Liver and Stomach; the Liver having a clear association with the storage, distribution and elimination of the toxins inherent in the chemotherapy, and Stomach relating to the preoccupation with nausea and vomiting experienced by the patients. Each session began with a systematic treatment of these two meridians, in order to address the most distressing aspects of the chemotherapy.

Generally speaking, almost all the side-effects were diminished, some more than others, ranging from 40% to 83% reduction. The average rate of improvement for the combined side-effects of all the patients was 64%. The most significant improvements occurred with the very common side-effect of vomiting and nausea. In one case, a patient who, before Shiatsu, had been vomiting up to 10 times a day for the whole week following the chemotherapy, vomited 3 times only on the day after the chemotherapy, after the first Shiatsu treatment.

Another significant improvement was in mouth problems: patients were quickly able to resume normal eating because of this improvement, and therefore more quickly recovered from physical fatigue.

This table below shows the rate of improvement for each side-effect.

Side-effect	Average intensity without Shiatsu	Average intensity with Shiatsu	0% gain
Hair loss	7.6	6.1	20.0
Nausea	7	2.2	68.6
Vomiting	6.9	1.2	82.6
Physical fatigue	8.4	2.8	66.7
Psychological fatigue	8.2	4.7	42.7
Skin problems	4.6	1.3	71.7
Tingling sensations	4.8	1.0	79.2

Headache	3.0	1.0	66.7
Shivering	6.0	1.0	83.3
Diarrhoea	4.0	2.9	28.8
Constipation	6.2	1.8	71.0
Mouth problems	6.5	1.4	78.5
Liver pain	6.0	0.0	100.0
Fever	8.5	2.7	68.8
Muscular/articular pain	4.0	2.2	45.0
Odour of the chem.	10.0	3.3	67.0
Coughing	8.0	5.3	33.8
Ringin g in the ears	8.0	0.0	100.0
Sensation of drunkenness	9.0	1.8	80.0
Total	6.5	2.3	64.4

On the other hand, the side-effect least improved was that of hair loss. However, Shiatsu enabled the patients to find the wearing of the refrigerated cap more acceptable, on an emotional level. The distress caused by loss of hair and its relation to the question of self-acceptance, evolved positively with time.

Second least improved was psychological fatigue. It is difficult to measure the extent of this effect, since there are many factors involved, even when the general effects of Shiatsu were appreciated by the patients. Both physical and mental fatigue were found to be linked with nausea and vomiting. As vomiting and nausea subsided, symptoms of fatigue became less extreme, and patients' general state improved.

Case study results

The following case most closely represents the trend of results in the whole study.

The table below represents the progress of side-effects for this patient.

All the patient's side-effects diminished significantly and cumulatively over the period of the study, while she was receiving Shiatsu combined with chemotherapy.

Sex: F		Age: 46			Principal pathology: breast cancer Metastases: bones			
Chemotherapy								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product: FEC 100 • Timing: 1 treatment every 3 weeks • Total number envisaged: 6 • Refrigerated cap: yes 								
Number of treatments before beginning Shiatsu: 1								
Symptoms	Chemo. Without Shiatsu	Shiatsu 1	Shiatsu 2	Shiatsu 3	Shiatsu 4	Shiatsu 5	Average after Shiatsu	0% gain
Hair loss	10	10	10	10	5	3	7.6	24.0
Nausea	8	0	10	0	0	0	2.0	75.0
Vomiting	8	0	10	0	0	0	2.0	75
Physical fatigue	10	7	9	4	4	0	4.8	52.0
Psychological fatigue	10	7	9	2	3	0	4.2	58.0
Oral problems	10	2	2	0	0	0	0.8	92.0
Herpes	10	0	0	0	2	0	0.4	96.0
Sensation of drunkenness	9	9	0	0	0	0	1.8	80.0
	75						23.6	68.5
Duration of fatigue after chemo, without Shiatsu: 8 days					With Shiatsu: 0.5 days		0% gain: 93.8	

It is important to note in Fig 1. the values shown in the 2nd session. All the side-effects either returned to their original intensity, or stayed the same. This session took place 4 days after the chemotherapy treatment, while all the rest were able to be carried out immediately following the chemotherapy, which indicates the importance of the timing of the Shiatsu treatment.

General conclusions

Shiatsu appeared to diminish many side-effects of the chemotherapy, particularly where the Shiatsu session closely followed the chemotherapy, ideally the same day and immediately following the perfusion.

Since this study was completed, other patients have been offered the same opportunity of receiving Shiatsu as a complementary treatment to chemotherapy, and their reactions have confirmed the results of the study.

The Shiatsu treatment was easily integrated into the hospital routine, taking its place in a programme of patient care, promoting the well being of patients and as an important aid to medical treatment.