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ACUPRESSURE EASES DEMENTIA AGITATION

Helping a dementia patient deal with the symptoms of agitation is one of the most challenging problems for healthcare workers and family. An upset patient might get into a fit of yelling, attack other people, and even risk hurting themselves and others.

A recent study was conducted to determine if Acupressure could be of benefit in controlling these types of outbursts. Easing the emotional disturbances that accompany the intellectual faculty changes in memory, concentration, and judgment associated with dementia were investigated in a small, but meaningful study. Results were published in the February 2007 issue of the *Journal of Clinical Nursing*.

A total of 31 dementia patients were studied under the guidance of Li-Chan Lin, PhD, at the National Yang-Ming University in Taipei, Taiwan. Each person received Acupressure in 15 minute sessions delivered twice daily over a 4-week period. Following one week of no treatment, patients then received a comparison treatment consisting of four weeks of “companionship and conversation.” Twenty patients completed the entire program.

The researchers found, overall, that the Acupressure therapy showed a significant reduction in verbal and physical attacks, compared to the “companionship and conversation” treatment. Additionally, the Acupressure therapy showed an immediate improvement in patient behavior and appeared to prevent aggressive symptoms from occurring in the first place.

The researchers concluded, “Massage and touch may serve as alternatives or complements to other therapies for the management of behavioral, emotional, and perhaps other conditions associated with dementia.” Dr. Lin suggested that due to the similarities between Acupressure and massage therapy, this sort of treatment might become more readily accepted by Western medicine.