



Effectiveness of Acupuncture for Chronic Radiation-Induced Xerostomia in Head and Neck Cancer: A Multi-Center Randomized Clinical Trial

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This study looked at how acupuncture compares to other treatments for a condition that causes very bad dry mouth in patients who have had radiation therapy for head and neck cancer (called chronic radiation-induced xerostomia (RIX)). Many of these patients have severe dry mouth. This causes pain and makes it hard to speak, chew, swallow, and sleep. This study wanted to see if acupuncture could help people with this problem.

Acupuncture involves using fine needles inserted into the skin at certain points on the body. This study included 258 patients from different cancer centers across the United States. Patients were randomly assigned (like the flip of a coin) to one of three groups: real acupuncture, fake acupuncture (real needles at “fake” points), or standard advice for oral hygiene (brushing, rinsing, use of lip balms, etc.). Patients' symptoms and quality of life were measured four times over six months.

The results showed that true acupuncture was the best of all three groups at reducing dry mouth symptoms, even years after radiation. Patients who received real acupuncture reported lower levels of dry mouth and better quality of life compared to those who received fake acupuncture or standard advice for oral hygiene.

