

# Acupressure calms children before surgery

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An acupressure treatment applied to children undergoing anesthesia noticeably lowers their anxiety levels and makes the stress of surgery more calming for them and their families, UC Irvine anesthesiologists have learned.

According to Dr. Zeev Kain, anesthesiology and perioperative care chair, and his Yale University collaborator Dr. Shu-Ming Wang, this noninvasive, drug-free method is an effective, complementary anxiety-relief therapy for children during surgical preparation. Sedatives currently used before anesthesia can cause nausea and prolong sedation.

"Anxiety in children before surgery is bad because of the emotional toll on the child and parents, and this anxiety can lead to prolonged recovery and the increased use of analgesics for postoperative pain," said Kain, who led the acupressure study. "What's great about the use of acupressure is that it costs very little and has no side effects."

In this study, Kain and his Yale colleagues applied adhesive acupressure beads to 52 children between the ages of 8 and 17 who were to undergo endoscopic stomach surgery. In half the children, a bead was applied to the Extra-1 acupoint, which is located in the midpoint between the eyebrows. In the other half, the bead was applied to a spot above the left eyebrow that has no reported clinical effects.

Thirty minutes later, the researchers noted decreased anxiety levels in the children who had the beads applied to the Extra-1 acupoint. In turn, anxiety levels increased in the other group. Overall, they found the use

of acupressure had no effect on the surgical procedure.

"As anesthesiologists, we need to look at all therapeutic opportunities to make the surgical process less stressful for all patients," Kain said. "We can't assume that Western medical approaches are the only viable ones, and we have an obligation to look at integrative treatments like acupressure as a way to improve the surgery experience."

Surgery is traumatic for most children, and Kain leads research to find integrative methods, such as soothing music, massage, and Chinese acupuncture and acupressure treatments, to make the surgical period more calming for patients and their families.

Source: University of California - Irvine

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