

Acupuncture relieves hot flashes from prostate cancer treatment

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Acupuncture provides long-lasting relief to hot flashes, heart palpitations and anxiety due to side effects of the hormone given to counteract testosterone, the hormone that induces prostate cancer, according to a study published in the April issue of the *International Journal of Radiation Oncology•Biology•Physics*, an official journal of the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO).

The main treatments for men with metastatic prostate cancer are either surgery or hormone therapy to significantly reduce the level of testosterone in the body. Eliminating [testosterone](#) has been proven to keep the cancer in check by starving the cancer of hormones it needs to grow and spread. However, about half of the time, this therapy also causes very uncomfortable hot flashes similar to those women experience during menopause. The main way to combat hot flashes is to take antidepressants, but these drugs can cause side effects of their own, including nausea, dry mouth, sleeplessness, altered appetite and sexual changes.

In a prospective study conducted in the department of [radiation oncology](#) and the acupuncture section of New York Methodist Hospital and Weill Cornell Medical College of Cornell University, both in New York, researchers evaluated 14 men who were experiencing hot flashes due to hormone therapy for prostate cancer. Upon enrolling in the study, the men were given a hot flash score (HFS) to evaluate their discomfort from daily hot flashes. The mean initial HFS was 28.3.

Participants then received acupuncture twice a week for 30 minutes at a time for four weeks. Two weeks after receiving acupuncture, their HFS was measured again and had dropped more than half to 10.3. At six weeks post-treatment, their HFS was 7.5. After eight months, the men were evaluated again and their mean HFS was 7.

"Our study shows that physicians and patients have an additional treatment for something that affects many men undergoing prostate cancer treatment and actually has long-term benefits, as opposed to more side effects," Hani Ashamalla, M.D., lead author of the study and a radiation oncologist at New York Methodist Hospital, said. "We are now designing a randomized clinical trial to further evaluate acupuncture after [prostate cancer](#) treatment. I encourage men suffering this symptom to talk to their doctors about enrolling."

More information: For more information on radiation therapy for prostate cancer, visit [www.rtanswers.org/treatmentinf ...cancertypes/prostate](http://www.rtanswers.org/treatmentinf...cancertypes/prostate)

Provided by American Society for Radiation Oncology

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