

Acupuncture and acupressure may help alleviate pain and anxiety in patients undergoing surgery for gynecologic cancer

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Patients undergoing surgery for ovarian and endometrial cancers often experience anxiety and pain. A new study indicates that acupressure

before surgery may help reduce anxiety and following this up with acupuncture during surgery may provide an added benefit of lessening severe pain. The research is published by Wiley online in *Cancer*, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society.

A total of 99 patients with gynecologic cancers participated in the study co-led by Eran Ben-Arye, MD, of Lin Medical Center, in Haifa, Israel—45 in Group A, 25 in Group B, and 29 in Group C. Group A participants received acupressure-related touch and relaxation treatments that began within 3 hours prior to [surgery](#) and continued until the patient began undergoing [general anesthesia](#); they then received acupuncture therapy during surgery involving points shown to be effective for reducing pain. Group B participants received preoperative acupressure only, and group C participants received standard care. Both before and after surgery, patients completed questionnaires that scored the quality of their recovery and included questions about pain, anxiety, and other quality-of-life parameters.

Postoperative scores overall were higher in Groups A and B—indicating better recovery—than scores in Group C. Group A scores related to [severe pain](#) were significantly higher than Group C scores. Both intervention groups had higher scores than controls in terms of scores related to anxiety and depression.

"The inclusion of preoperative integrative medical touch and relaxation therapies for anxiety, along with intraoperative acupuncture for [pain](#) and other quality of life-related concerns, should be considered for [patients](#) undergoing gynecological oncology surgery," said Dr. Ben-Arye.

"Training in such 'integrative oncology' is needed for complementary medicine providers, acupuncturists, surgeons, anesthesiologists, and operating room nurses, who need to work together and communicate with integrative oncology practitioners in the complex operating room setting."

An accompanying editorial noted that integrative oncology is gaining acceptance as a clinical field by Western medicine. The author, Ana Maria Lopez, MD, MPH, MACP, FRCP, of the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center, Thomas Jefferson University, in Philadelphia, stressed that although larger studies are needed to confirm the results, the data add to a growing body of literature in support of reimbursement for [integrative oncology](#) interventions such as acupuncture.

More information: Acupuncture during gynecological oncology surgery: A randomized controlled trial assessing the impact of integrative therapies on perioperative pain and anxiety, *Cancer* (2023). DOI: [10.1002/cncr.34542](https://doi.org/10.1002/cncr.34542)

Ana Maria Lopez, Integrative oncology in cancer care: Reaching a tipping point, *Cancer* (2023). DOI: [10.1002/cncr.34539](https://doi.org/10.1002/cncr.34539)

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