

THE JOURNAL OF THE IRISH HEAD AND NECK SOCIETY

Title: Acupuncture for Radiation-Induced Xerostomia; a recent audit from a working clinic.

Body: BACKGROUND;

Xerostomia is a distressing and longterm side-effect post-radiotherapy for Head and Neck Cancer (HNC) patients. Research from centres worldwide suggest that acupuncture may be beneficial for treating xerostomia. An acupuncture service has been available for this patient group in SIVUH, Cork, since 2008. Results from an audit of recent attendees at this working clinic (2022-24) exceed an earlier audit done of this service (2008-14).

METHODS;

Results of 66 consecutive patients who attended for 12 sessions of acupuncture with a Licensed Acupuncturist over a 6-8 week period from 2022 - 2024 were examined. All were 4 months or more post-radiotherapy. All completed the Xerostomia Inventory (XI) validated outcome measure, and a treatment specific questionnaire, before the first treatment and after completing 12 treatments.

RESULTS;

A decrease in XI scores of 6 points or more is considered clinically significant. Results of 66 patients analysed show that 71% of patients had a positive outcome with a mean overall XI improvement of 8.7 points post-acupuncture compared to pre-acupuncture scores. The treatment specific questionnaire captured further rich qualitative data.

CONCLUSION;

Audit of recent attendees at this working clinic shows that acupuncture alleviates symptoms of postradiation xerostomia in many HNC patients leading to a welcome improvement in quality of life.

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