

Case report: Acupuncture treatment in Hashimoto's Thyroiditis

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Abstract

Over 90% of the thyroid cases are caused by conditions that have an autoimmune nature. Hashimoto's thyroiditis is presented as progressive and lifelong autoimmune disease, starting subtly and usually developing slow and long before the patient is diagnosed. Patients diagnosed with hypothyroidism are twice at risk more possible to develop heart diseases like high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Acupuncture as part of the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has potential therapeutic value in the treatment of Hashimoto's thyroiditis. The treatment can improve the clinical symptoms and manifestations of the disease, improve the immune system, stimulate the nervous system, balance the Qi energy and unblock the Blood circulation in the body. In the research is presented a case of a 58 year old woman diagnosed with Hashimoto's thyroiditis two and half months before starting the acupuncture treatments. The patient has done 25 treatments in a period of 8 months. After the 10th therapy the Eutirox dose was decreased from 0.50mg to 0.25mg. Although sometimes it takes more time to achieve a positive results, the effort always pays off because in this way acupuncture treatments allow the body to heal itself at its own pace. The goal of the treatment is always to restore good health, normalize hormones and restore normal thyroid activity.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese medicine; Acupuncture; Endocrinology; Hashimoto's

1. Introduction

Over 90% of the thyroid cases are caused by conditions that have an autoimmune nature. Hashimoto's thyroiditis is a chronic condition and the most common cause of hypothyroidism, which incidence rate gradually increases the last few years. Hashimoto's thyroiditis is presented as progressive and lifelong autoimmune disease, starting subtly and usually developing slow and long before the patient is diagnosed. Common hypothyroidism symptoms are: hair loss, brittle nails, fatigue, aversion to cold, muscle weakness, weight gain, depression, constipation, intolerance to cold, goiter and other. Patients diagnosed with hypothyroidism are twice at risk more possible to develop heart diseases like high blood pressure and high cholesterol. The abnormal thyroid function shows a lot of metabolic abnormalities, thyroid and systemic symptoms like goiter, anterior neck discomfort, fatigue, celiac disease, mood swings, increased risk for miscarriage and infertility.

There are 5 stages of Hashimoto's disease:

- Genetic predisposition
- Immune Cell Infiltration of the Thyroid Gland

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- Subclinical hypothyroidism
- Overt hypothyroidism
- Progression to Other Autoimmune Disorders

By the terms of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), Yang Deficiency is the main cause of hypothyroidism and its function to warm, transform and motivate the body is insufficient. The primary organ systems affected by the disease are the Spleen and Kidney and in the advanced stage of the disease the Heart organ system becomes more affected.

Acupuncture as part of the TCM has potential therapeutic value in the treatment of Hashimoto's thyroiditis. The treatment can improve the clinical symptoms and manifestations of the disease, improve the immune system, stimulate the nervous system, restore the hormonal balance, balance the Qi energy and unblock the Blood circulation in the body [1] [2] [3] [4].

2. Case Report

In the research is presented a case of a 58 year old woman diagnosed with Hashimoto's thyroiditis two and half months before starting the acupuncture treatments. Echo of the thyroid gland showed an image with hypoechoic, inhomogeneous and a coarser structure with the presence of hypoechoic reflections of an orderly size without the presence of pathological formations in both lobes. The patient was feeling choking sensation in the throat. The blood results showed increased TSH, anti-TPO (>1300) and cholesterol levels. The patient was taking Eutirox, cholesterol regulating medications, vitamin D and Hipotirox tea.

The patient has done 25 treatments in a period of 8 months. After the 10th therapy the Eutirox dose was decreased from 0.50mg to 0.25mg. The patient is treated with acupuncture in a center for Traditional Chinese Medicine and acupuncture, by a doctor specialist in acupuncture. Treatments are made indoor, on a room temperature, on both sides of the body, with duration of 45-60 minutes. Acupuncture points used in the treatment are: RN4 (QuanYuan), ST9 (RenYing), DU20 (BaiHui), DU14 (DaZhui), BL20 (PiShu), LI4 (HeGu), GB20 (FengChi), RN6 (QiHai), BL15 (XinShu), BL23 (ShenShu), ST36 (ZuSanLi), SP9 (YinLingQuan), SP6 (SanYinJiao), KI3 (TaiXi), DU4 (MingMen), LR2 (TaiChong) and Ashi points located on the neck (front and back). In the treatment were used acupuncture needles with dimensions 0.25x25 mm manufactured by Wuijiuang City Medical & Health Material Co., LTD.

The selected acupuncture points regulate endocrine disorders and reproductive syndromes. The points on the body can regulate hormone levels and neuro-immune-endocrine system. The points chosen in the anterior neck near the thyroid gland directly regulate the thyroid function. [5] Most affected organs are the spleen, liver and heart. if the spleen Qi is deficient, then dampness accumulates in the body and congeals into phlegm, which in turn forms goiter, choking sensation in the throat and weight gain [6].

Before and during the treatments were done several blood analysis. The improvement of the blood went gradually, until approaching the desired results - to reduce the values of anti TPO and TSH. The initial goal of the treatment was to reduce the Anti TPO levels.

Table 1 Results from blood tests showing anti TPO and TSH improvement

Date	TSH (0.4-4.2 mUI/ml)	Anti-TPO (<34 IU/mL)
07.07.21	15	1300
28.01.22	7.01	576
28.02.22	7.8	951
25.05.22	4.49	214
05.07.22	4.81	263
24.08.22	6.18	233

Hashimoto's disease is an autoimmune condition that attacks the thyroid gland. When there's an autoimmune disease, the immune system treats the body as an invader and begins to attack it. The thyroid gland, after being attacked for prolonged time by the immune system, it no longer produces enough of its vital hormones as it should [7].

In such conditions, each patient is seen separately and treated as a separate individual, so that the treatments are different for all patients, even though they may have the same disease. Individual approach is the most important in the treatment and it is the key to quick results and eradication of the disease.

The goal of the treatment in this case is to gradually normalize the values of TSH and anti TPO. Considering that it is a chronic and autoimmune condition, the treatment is a little slower, but the results are visible and the patient is feeling great. The patient will continue with the treatments until the results return to normal values. Our goal is to show that acupuncture is a valid and effective treatment for endocrine diseases and that the treatment achieves satisfactory results gradually. It takes patience and lots of effort to allow the body to regain its own harmony and balance. With this case report we wanted to show what can be achieved with acupuncture treatment with 25 treatments in 8 months for Hashimoto's thyroiditis. For this paper, additional results of the following treatments will be published until the condition is completely normalized.

3. Conclusion

Although sometimes it takes more time to achieve a positive results, the effort always pays off because in this way acupuncture treatments allow the body to heal itself at its own pace. The goal of the treatment is always to restore good health, normalize hormones and restore normal thyroid activity.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author have declared that no competing interests exist.

Statement of ethical approval

Ethical approval to report this case was obtained from the Committee of the Chamber of Complementary and Alternative Medicine Practitioners of Republic of North Macedonia.

Statement of informed consent

Written informed consent was obtained from the patient for their anonymized information to be published in this article.

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