

# Lymphoedema Acupuncture Activity

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# Two roles today



Chair, BLS Scientific Committee



Researcher in Integrative Medicine  
Supportive Oncology Research Team  
Mount Vernon Cancer Centre

East and North Hertfordshire



NHS Trust

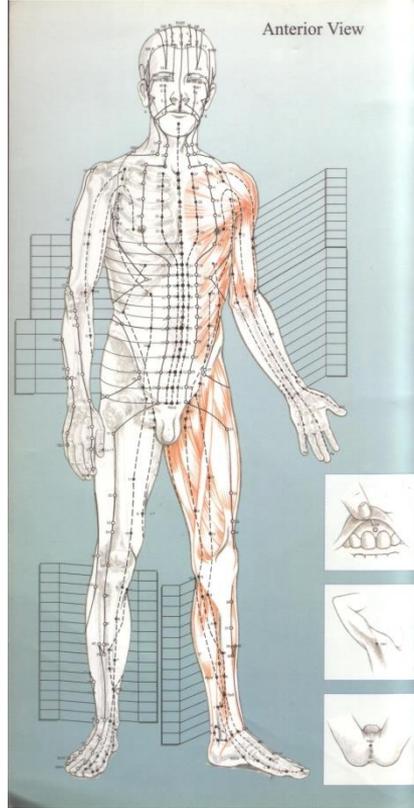


# Today's presentation

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- ▶ **Acupuncture in the management of lymphoedema**
  - ▶ Acupuncture and lymphoedema
  - ▶ Evidence base
  - ▶ Acupuncture for wellbeing
  - ▶ A model for active participation in self management
- ▶ **Get Active in Research!**
  - ▶ The BLSSC & BJCN Case Report Competition
  - ▶ Applications for Honorary Member of the BLSSC

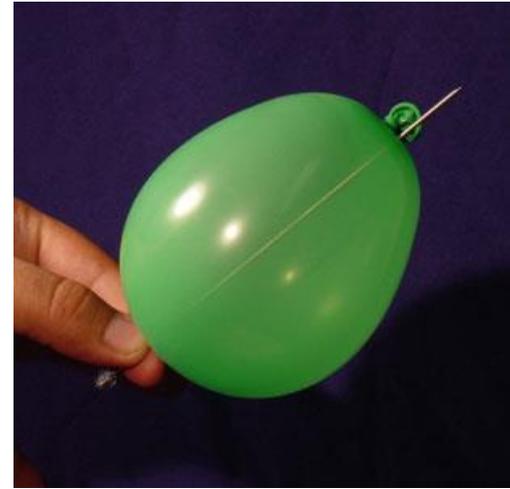
# What are acupuncture & moxibustion



# Acupuncture and lymphoedema?

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- ▶ **Concerns that needling may:**
  - ▶ Cause infection (cellulitis)
  - ▶ Exacerbate existing or cause lymphoedema
  - ▶ No evidence for or against
  - ▶ Acupuncture is not venepuncture
- ▶ **Challenge for acupuncture:**
  - ▶ To needle or not needle the affected or at risk area.



# Evidence base: studies

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- ▶ Kanakura Y et al. (2002) Effectiveness of acupuncture and moxibustion treatment for lymphedema following intrapelvic lymph node dissection: a preliminary report. *Am J Chin Med* 30(1):37–43 [PubMed: 12067095]
- ▶ Alem M, Gurgel MS (2008) Acupuncture in the rehabilitation of women after breast cancer surgery a case series. *Acupunct Med* 26(2):87–93 [PubMed: 18591908]
- ▶ Cassileth BR et al. (2011) A safety and efficacy pilot study of acupuncture for the treatment of chronic lymphoedema. *Acupunct Med* 29(3):170–172 [PubMed: 21685498]
- ▶ Cassileth BR et al. (2013) Acupuncture in the treatment of upper-limb lymphedema: results of a pilot study. *Cancer* 119(13):2455–2461 [PubMed: 23576267]
- ▶ Smith CA, Pirodda M, Kilbreath S (2014) A feasibility study to examine the role of acupuncture to reduce symptoms of lymphoedema after breast cancer: a randomised controlled trial. *Acupunct Med* 32(5):387–393 [PubMed: 24990160]
- ▶ Jeong YJ et al. (2015) Treatment of lymphedema with Saam acupuncture in patients with breast cancer: a pilot study. *Med Acupunct* 27(3):206–215 [PubMed: 26155321]
- ▶ Yao C et al. (2016) Effects of warm acupuncture on breast cancer-related chronic lymphedema: a randomized controlled trial. *Curr Oncol* 23(1):e27–e34 [PubMed: 26966410]
- ▶ Bao T et al. (2018) Acupuncture for breast cancer-related lymphedema: a randomized controlled trial. *Breast Cancer Res Treat* 170(1):77–87

# Evidence base: systematic reviews

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- ▶ Chien TJ et al (2019) The effect of acupuncture in breast cancer related lymphoedema (BCRL): a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Integrative Cancer Therapies*. 18:1-9
- ▶ Hou W et al (2019) Acupuncture therapy for breast cancer related-lymphedema: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *J. Obstet. Gynaecol. Res.* 45(12):2307-2317\*
- ▶ Kim T-H et al (2018) Current evidence of acupuncture for symptoms related to breast cancer survivors: a PRISMA-compliant systematic review of clinical studies in Korea. *Medicine*. 97-32(e11793)
- ▶ Yu S et al (2019) Effects of acupuncture on breast cancer-related lymphoedema. *Explore*. Doi 10.1016/j.explore.2019.06.002
- ▶ Zhang X et al (2019) Effects of acupuncture on breast cancer-related lymphoedema: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials. *Acupuncture in Medicine*. 37(1):16-24
  
- ▶ Wang C et al (2019) Moxibustion as a therapy for breast cancer-related lymphedema in female adults: a preliminary randomized controlled trial. *Integrative Cancer Therapies*. 18:1-9
- ▶ Yeh c-h et al (2019) Comparison of effectiveness between warm acupuncture with local-distal points combination and local distribution points combination in breast cancer-related lymphedema patients: a study protocol for a multicentre, randomized, controlled clinical trial. *Trials* **20**, 403.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-019-3491-4>

# Clinical experience

- ▶ “Edward” – chronic oedema secondary to treatment for colorectal cancer
- ▶ de Valois B, Glynn-Jones R (2017) Acupuncture in the supportive care of colorectal cancer survivors: four case studies, Part 1. *European Journal of Oriental Medicine*, **8(6): 34-43.**



Photos courtesy of the patient:

Before taken 05 February 2017. After taken 22 March 2018

East and North Hertfordshire 

NHS Trust



# Thinking outside the box...

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- ▶ ... or how I reached a different understanding of how acupuncture can help people with lymphoedema ...

“ I don't think outside of the box; I think of what I can do with the box. ”



# Two observational studies

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- ▶ **Assessing the feasibility of using acupuncture and moxibustion to improve quality of life for cancer survivors with upper body lymphoedema**
  - ▶ NIHR Research for Innovation Speculation & Creativity Programme (Grant Reference Number PB-PG-0407-I0086)
- ▶ **Acupuncture and moxibustion in the management of (non-cancer-related) lower limb lymphoedema**
  - ▶ Supportive Oncology Research Team & Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre & Mount Vernon Hospital Lymphoedema Service
- ▶ **Thanks to Elaine Melsome, Lymphoedema Nurse Specialist. Mount Vernon Hospital Lymphoedema Service**



# Key characteristics of these studies

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## NIHR upper body cancer

- ▶ Formal mixed methods observational study
- ▶ 35 cancer survivors participants
  - ▶ 27 breast, 8 head & neck
- ▶ Up to 13 individualised treatments (7 + 6)
- ▶ Follow up at 4 & 12 weeks post end of treatment
- ▶ MYMOP, SF-36, PANAS
- ▶ Prof. Christine Moffatt, ILF

## Lower limb

- ▶ Informal
- ▶ Clinical outcomes
- ▶ 6 participants
  - ▶ 4 non-cancer related
- ▶ Up to 7 treatments
- ▶ Follow up at 4 & 12 weeks post end of treatment
- ▶ MYMOP, LYMQOL-Leg, SF-36
- ▶ Follow up focus group



# Key questions of these studies

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## NIHR Upper body

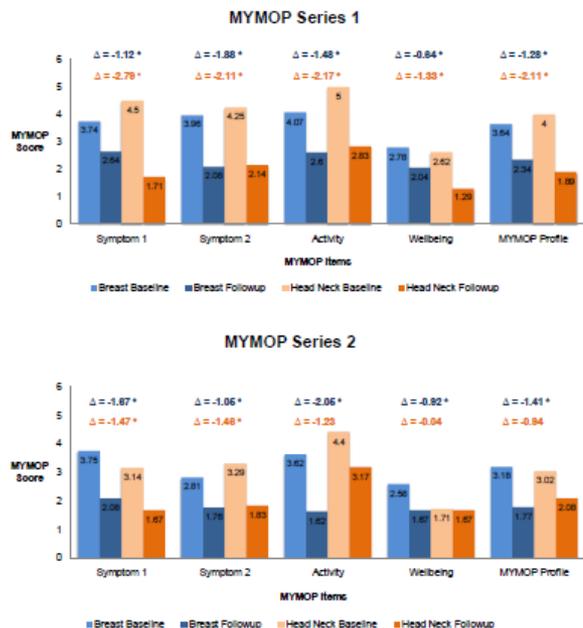
- ▶ Can acu/moxa improve wellbeing in cancer survivors with lymphoedema?
- ▶ What symptoms are most troublesome for these individuals?
- ▶ Is acupuncture a safe intervention for people with lymphoedema?

## Lower limb

- ▶ Are these individuals interested in having acu/moxa?
  - ▶ Is there potential for service development and for future research?
  - ▶ What are the challenges if needling is restricted to points above the waist?
  - ▶ What are the practical challenges of accommodating bariatric patients?
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# Key findings - MYMOP

## NIHR Upper body



### What symptoms are most troublesome ?

#### Breast cancer participants:

Specified lymphoedema-related symptoms including:

- Pain, nagging ache, dull pain, discomfort, aching, heaviness, sensations of a "bag" under the arm, inability to wear clothes
- Swelling.

#### Head and neck participants:

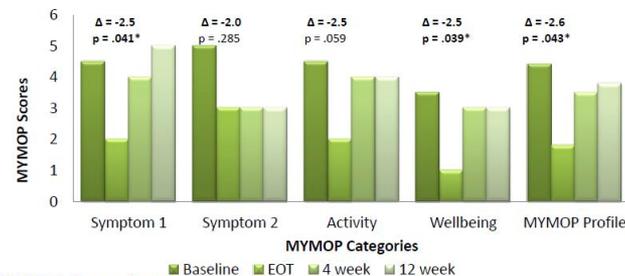
Specified a wider range of musculoskeletal symptoms, including those affecting the neck, back, jaw, shoulder, knee, legs and feet.

#### Psychological symptoms:

Both groups specified a range of psychological symptoms, including:

- Anxiety, stress, feeling depressed
- Sleep disturbance and insomnia
- Bereavement issues.

## Lower Limb



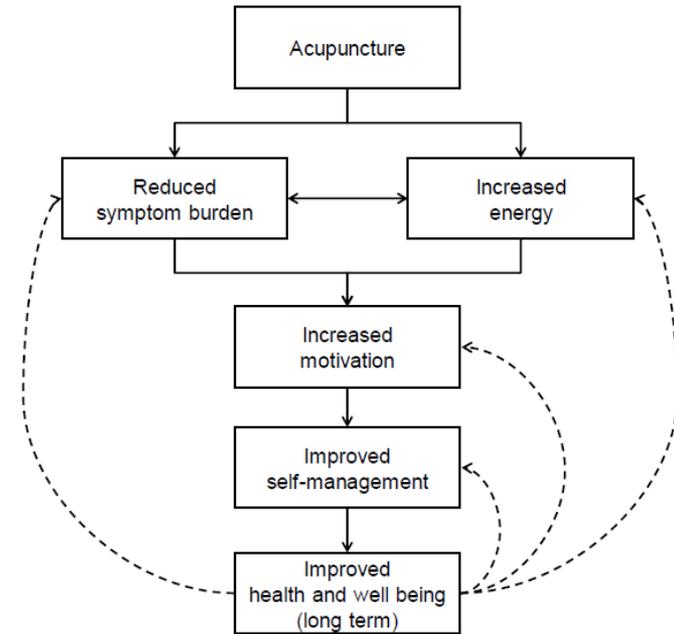
### MYMOP Symptoms

Patients specified a range of symptoms.

- Symptom 1 (n=6) included balance, motivation, tingling in foot, mobility, bladder function, groin/hip strength
- Symptom 2 (n=4) included shoulder pain, breathing, sleep (n=2).

# Some observations and a model

- ▶ Many participants reported improved wellbeing
- ▶ Reduced symptoms
- ▶ More energy
- ▶ Increased motivation
- ▶ Improved self-management



Acu Moxa as a process to facilitate long-term healthcare

# How does this relate to being active?

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# Breast cancer survivors said:

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*We go out and we do things far more now than what we used to do, even this time last year I didn't have the energy that I have now, it's marvellous.” (004 BC)*

***“When I came back in January ... I said to her ‘I’ve joined Weight Watchers, I’m really being positive about this and I’m really working on my exercises for the lymphoedema, I’m really working hard’ ... and I honestly say this is the acupuncture and the moxibustion ... it changed the way I thought about myself.” (004 BC)***

*I felt very energetic ... I just felt woken up, you know, much more energetic. Which has continued, to be honest.” (002 BC)*

*“It gave me so much confidence, I even changed my job! Which was incredible under the circumstances, you know, and I’ve done so well with my job ... I just started feeling so much better after the acupuncture. And I’ve gone back full-time, I was only doing part-time at the time, so all-in-all I’ve really got my life back.” (017 BC)*

*“It was just a general feeling of wanting to get on and try something new and do something, test out a new little project you’d had in mind for some time, rather than ‘oh, I might do it tomorrow’, which was more the attitude previously.” (019 BC)*

*“Now getting up in the morning I have energy all day, whereas before I was on the couch in front of the telly, I couldn’t be bothered ... now I’m back and I’m doing, you know, my everyday life is normal. I feel like I’ve been given my life back.” (016 BC)*

# People with lower limb lymphoedema said:

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“Legs used to ache most of the time after even moderate walking. No pain at the moment and therefore I am walking more. Able to relax and sleep soundly which I don’t normally do. I wasn’t a sceptic but I had doubts about reflexology, aromatherapy, and acupuncture but I am very impressed with how much it seems to have benefitted me and helped me.” (“Bruno”)

“My sleep has improved, my alertness has as well. My bowel movement has improved and my energy levels also. My walking has improved no end.” (“Graham”)

*“The improved sleep has given me more energy and motivated me to take on more exercise to increase my mobility.”*

*“On a recent visit to the lymphoedema clinic on examination there was a marked reduction in the size of my legs.” (“Faye”)*

“I did make changes with my diet, getting out walking short distances per day, also cycling.” (“Graham”)

# Discussion & Conclusion

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- ▶ Traditional acupuncture contributes to “enabled coping” (Price et al 2013)
- ▶ A process that enables transformation and improvement in overall wellbeing, rather than a magic bullet targeted at a specific symptom (Hsu 2012, de Valois et al 2016)
- ▶ Considering acupuncture in these ways may be helpful in managing chronic conditions and enabling self management
- ▶ Potential to facilitate people with lymphoedema to become more active.



# Related publications

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- ▶ de Valois B, Asprey A, Young T (2016) "The monkey on your shoulder": a qualitative study of lymphoedema patients' attitudes to and experiences of acupuncture and moxibustion. *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, **Article ID 4298420**
- ▶ de Valois B, Young T, Melsome E (2012) Assessing the feasibility of using acupuncture and moxibustion to improve quality of life for cancer survivors with upper body lymphoedema. *European Journal of Oncology Nursing*, **16(3): 301-9.**
- ▶ de Valois B, Peckham R (2011) Treating the person and not the disease: acupuncture in the management of cancer treatment-related lymphoedema. *European Journal of Oriental Medicine*, **6(6): 37-49. (Case reports)**
- ▶ de Valois B (2013) Acupuncture and moxibustion in the management of non-cancer-related lower limb lymphoedema. *European Journal of Oriental Medicine*, **7(4): 13-21. (Case reports)**

# Get Active in Research

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- ▶ Announcing Case Report Competition
- ▶ BLS Scientific Committee & British Journal of Community Nursing
- ▶ Open to BLS members
- ▶ Deadline for entries –  
**Sunday, 31 May 2020**
- ▶ Opportunity to get support to publish
- ▶ And maybe win a prize!



# For full details:

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- ▶ *BLS News & Views Winter 2020- Research Section*
  - ▶ **Pages 4-5:** BLSSC & BJCN Case Report Competition Submission Instructions
  - ▶ **Page 6:** Case Reports – Assessment Criteria
  - ▶ **(Look out for lots of helpful articles about case reports)**
- ▶ **BLS Website**
  - ▶ <https://www.thebls.com/documents-library/blssc-bjcn-case-report-competition-submission-instructions-2020>
  - ▶ Or search in BLS Resources for “Case Report”

# And in addition to writing a case report...

- ▶ Call for Honorary Member of the BLS Scientific Committee
- ▶ Deadline for applications:  
**Tuesday, 31 March 2020**
- ▶ Full info in *News & Views*:
  - ▶ *Page 17: Call for applications*
  - ▶ *Page 19: Natalie Kruger reports on her experience as honorary member*

What me,  
write a case  
report?



*I already spend a quarter of my day writing patient notes and doctor's letters....*

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*And another half of my day trying to untangle other people's problems...it's like spaghetti sometimes!*

*But there again, that's where you sometimes find real pearls of wisdom...*



*I did have patient with a really unusual presentation a few weeks ago though... I wonder if anyone else has seen one like that...?*

*Why did that patient respond to that treatment in that way? I've not seen that before. I wonder if anyone else has?*

*I see patients like this all the time, but other people don't seem to. Might be useful to share an example.*

*Go on.... Try the competition. What have you got to lose? Follow the instructions, break it down into sections, submit!*

*It could be just the thing to help a patient or a colleague out there!*





# Thank you!

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- ▶ BSL Scientific Committee

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- ▶ Acupuncture & Research

- ▶ Dr Beverley de Valois

- Researcher in Integrative Medicine

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