

Letter to the Editor

Potential Value of Electroacupuncture in the Treatment of Gastrointestinal Symptoms of COVID-19

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Dear Editor,

I read with great interest an article in your journal about the novel characteristics of gastrointestinal symptoms in inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) patients with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).¹ IBD is a digestive system disease with gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms as the main symptom, so it is easy to develop new characteristics in parallel with the GI symptoms of COVID-19. We should accurately assess the potential threat of COVID-19 to the GI tract and actively respond to it. It is well known that COVID-19 is a complex, multi-system infection with respiratory system complications as the main symptom. From this perspective, the positive effects of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) have once again been affirmed in the context of the uncertain risks brought about by the continued spread of the pandemic. In the meantime, it should be noted that electroacupuncture, as the classic treatment of TCM, has outstanding effects in the conditioning of GI functions and is a potential treatment strategy for COVID-19 GI symptoms.

As is known to all, novel coronavirus mainly infects cells through angiotensin converting enzyme II (ACE2) mediation, and digestive tract organs such as the small intestine, appendix, gallbladder, and pancreas all express ACE2 to varying degrees. In other words, the inflammation induced in these digestive organs by a novel coronavirus infection is the main cause of GI symptoms in patients. To the best of our knowledge, diarrhea and vomiting are the most common GI symptoms in COVID-19 patients. The use of TCM to solve GI symptoms in COVID-19 cases suggests that electroacupuncture also has the potential clinical value of regulating GI functions and improving intestinal immunity. Studies have shown that electroacupuncture stimulation of the Zusanli acupoint can significantly reduce GI symptoms caused by severe acute pancreatitis, such as abdominal pain and abdominal distension.^{2–4} This evidence also provides the

basis and reference for electroacupuncture treatment of GI symptoms of COVID-19.

As far as we know, electroacupuncture is economical, environmentally friendly, and recyclable. Therefore, with the continuous risk and threat of infection caused by the spread of the pandemic, the potential effects of electroacupuncture as a TCM therapy in alleviating COVID-19 GI symptoms deserves attention. We expect a variety of TCM therapies to play an active role in the prevention and treatment of COVID-19. In addition to raising the possibility of electroacupuncture treatment for COVID-19 GI symptoms, I also call for a large randomized controlled trial to further clarify its potential therapeutic value.

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