

Acupuncture therapy of “regulating spirit and soothing liver” for treating insomnia in patients with breast cancer

Submission date	Recruitment status	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered
04/01/2023	No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Registration date	Overall study status	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan
07/03/2023	Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited	Condition category	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data
13/12/2024	Mental and Behavioural Disorders	<input type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Cancer patients often suffer from insomnia, which is a risk factor for cancer progression, and the influence of insomnia on different cancer varies. It is imperative to pay attention to and treat insomnia in patients with different types of cancer. Breast cancer patients have a high incidence of insomnia, which is often accompanied by anxiety, depression, and fatigue. These symptoms fit the pathogenesis of "liver depression" and "weakened body resistance" in traditional Chinese medicine theory. Based on the effective treatment of common insomnia with acupuncture, it is feasible to explore the efficacy and safety of acupuncture treatment of insomnia in patients with breast cancer. Dr De'an Zhou, a National Celebrated Traditional Chinese Medicine Expert, invented the acupuncture therapy of "regulating spirit", which can effectively improve insomnia. On this basis, and in consideration of the pathogenesis of "liver depression" and "a deficiency of Qi [low energy] and blood" in breast cancer, the research team proposed the acupuncture therapy of "regulating spirit and soothing liver", which focuses on four acupoints from the liver meridian, gallbladder meridian, spleen meridian and stomach meridian in the therapy of "regulating spirit". The new therapy can regulate the "spirit of mind and brain" and "the Qi of the liver and spleen", and will treat insomnia in patients with breast cancer effectively. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effects and safety of the acupuncture therapy of "regulating spirit and soothing liver" on insomnia in patients with breast cancer.

Who can participate?

Breast cancer patients with insomnia

What does the study involve?

Participants recruited into this study will be randomly divided into 2 groups according to a 1:1 ratio. Group A will receive normal acupuncture therapy and Group B will receive shallow acupuncture therapy as a control group. The treatment of both groups will be conducted over a period of 4 weeks, at a frequency of 3 sessions per week. The therapeutic effect is graded using a sleep scale.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Patients who participate in this trial will receive professional sleep assessment, corrective sleep concepts and acupuncture therapy for free, but the participants in the control group may benefit from less efficacy. The team may also provide extra treatment after the trial ends. Patients who participate in this trial may experience temporary sourness, numbness, downforce, distension or a sense of soreness during acupuncture treatment and minor bleeding or local bluish skin after acupuncture. The most serious side effect is fainting, but it is rare during clinical appointments.

Where is the study run from?

Outpatient Department of the Oncology and Psychosomatic Medicine Departments in Beijing Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Capital Medical University in Beijing (China)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

January 2022 to December 2025

Who is funding the study?

Beijing Municipal Health Commission (China)

Who is the main contact?

Dr Tingting Ma, tingtingntyy@163.com (China)

Contact information

Type(s)

Principal investigator

Contact name

Dr Tingting Ma

Contact details

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Additional identifiers

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)

Nil known

ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)

Nil known

Protocol serial number

Study information

Scientific Title

Randomized controlled study on acupuncture therapy of "regulating spirit and soothing liver" for insomnia patients with breast cancer

Study objectives

Acupuncture therapy of "regulating spirit and soothing liver" for treating insomnia in patients with breast cancer

Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

Approved 30/09/2022, Medical Ethics Committee of Beijing Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine affiliated with the Capital Medical University (No. 23, Art Museum Back Street, Dongcheng District, Beijing, China; +86 01087906734; bjzyyylwyh@163.com), ref: 2022BL02-059-02

Study design

Randomized controlled trial

Primary study design

Interventional

Study type(s)

Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Insomnia treatment in patients with breast cancer

Interventions

Current interventions as of 13/12/2023:

Participants will receive acupuncture therapy for "regulating spirit and soothing liver" for 8 weeks.

Time points are as follows:

Visit 1: Screening

Visit 2: Treatment initiation, participants will receive acupuncture for 8 weeks

Visit 3: 8 weeks after first acupuncture, treatment finish and follow-up

Visit 4: 1 month after first acupuncture, follow-up

Visit 5: 3 months after first acupuncture, follow-up

Patients who meet the inclusion criteria are randomized to one of two treatment groups:

Group A (receive normal acupuncture at selected acupoints)

Group B (receive shallow acupuncture at selected acupoints)

1. Selected acupoints:

GV20(Baihui)

GV24(Shenting)
EX-HN1(Sishencong)
GB15(Benshen)
Ht7(Shenmen)
Pc6(Neiguan)
Sp6(Sanyinjiao)
St36(Zusanli)
Sp10(Xuehai)
GB34(Yanglingquan)
LR3(Taichong)

2. Normal acupuncture therapy:

GV20, GV24, EX-HN1, GB15: The needle tip is inserted 8-15 mm at a 20°angle to the scalp.

Sp6, St36, Sp10, GB34: The needle tip is inserted 40 mm at a 90°angle to the skin.

Ht7, Pc6, LR3: The needle tip is inserted 20-25 mm at a 20°angle to the skin.

Each acupoint is used in neutral supplementation and draining methods and retained for 30 minutes.

3. Shallow acupuncture therapy:

The blunt needle on a cotton pad is stuck on the same acupoints as the treatment group and retained for 30 minutes.

4. Treatment will be conducted over a period of 8 weeks, at a frequency of 3 sessions/per week.

Previous interventions:

Participants will receive acupuncture therapy for “regulating spirit and soothing liver” for 4 weeks.

Time points are as follows:

Visit 1: Screening

Visit 2: Treatment initiation, participants will receive acupuncture for 4 weeks

Visit 3: 4 weeks after first acupuncture, treatment finish and follow-up

Visit 4: 1 month after first acupuncture, follow-up

Visit 5: 3 months after first acupuncture, follow-up

Patients who meet the inclusion criteria are randomized to one of four treatment groups:

Group A (receive normal acupuncture at selected acupoints)

Group B (receive shallow acupuncture at selected acupoints)

1. Selected acupoints:

GV20(Baihui)
GV24(Shenting)
EX-HN1(Sishencong)
GB15(Benshen)
Ht7(Shenmen)
Pc6(Neiguan)
Sp6(Sanyinjiao)
St36(Zusanli)
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Each acupoint is used in neutral supplementation and draining methods and retained for 30 minutes.

3. Shallow acupuncture therapy:

The blunt needle on a cotton pad is stuck on the same acupoints as the treatment group and retained for 30 minutes.

4. Treatment will be conducted over a period of 4 weeks, at a frequency of 3 sessions/ per week.

Intervention Type

Other

Primary outcome(s)

Current primary outcome measure as of 13/12/2023:

Therapeutic effect measured using the Pittsburgh sleep Scale (PSQI) at baseline (before treatment initiation), 2, 4, 6 and 8 weeks after the first acupuncture, and 1 and 3 months after the last acupuncture session

Previous primary outcome measure:

Therapeutic effect measured using the Pittsburgh sleep Scale (PSQI) at baseline (before treatment initiation), 2 and 4 weeks after the first acupuncture, and 1 and 3 months after the last acupuncture session

Key secondary outcome(s)

Current secondary outcome measures as of 13/12/2023:

Outcome measures are assessed at baseline (before treatment initiation), 2 and 4 weeks after the first acupuncture, and 1 and 3 months after the last acupuncture session unless otherwise stated:

1. Level of anxiety measured using the Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) questionnaire
2. Level of anxiety measured using the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ9)
3. Serum 5-HT concentration measured using Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA)
4. Temporary sleeping medication use measured using a Temporary Sleeping Medication Record Form
5. Level liver depression measured using TCM Liver Depression Symptom Assessment Table
6. Adverse events, including discomfort or bruising at the sites of needle insertion, nausea, or feeling faint, measured using participants reporting up to the 6-week acupuncture session

Previous secondary outcome measures:

Outcome measures are assessed at baseline (before treatment initiation), 2 and 4 weeks after the first acupuncture, and 1 and 3 months after the last acupuncture session unless otherwise stated:

1. Level of anxiety measured using the Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) questionnaire
2. Level of anxiety measured using the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ9)
3. Quality of life measured using the Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy-Breast Cancer (FACT-B) questionnaire
4. Serum 5-HT concentration measured using Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA)
5. Temporary sleeping medication use measured using a Temporary Sleeping Medication Record

Form

6. Level liver depression measured using TCM Liver Depression Symptom Assessment Table
7. Adverse events, including discomfort or bruising at the sites of needle insertion, nausea, or feeling faint, measured using participants reporting up to the 6-week acupuncture session

Completion date

31/12/2025

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Aged between 18 and 60 years old and female
2. Confirm the diagnosis of breast cancer and meet the diagnostic criteria for insomnia in DSM-V
3. PSQI score≥10
4. Individuals who do not have a language disorder or mental retardation and can answer and finish the questionnaire smoothly
5. Signed informed consent form and volunteered to participate in this study
6. Individuals who have a correct understanding of acupuncture studies and have good compliance with the observation and evaluation of researchers

Participant type(s)

Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Adult

Lower age limit

18 years

Upper age limit

60 years

Sex

Female

Key exclusion criteria

1. Individuals who have epilepsy, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, renal failure, hypertension, metabolic diseases and other major diseases
2. Individuals who have depression, anxiety, schizophrenia and other serious mental disorders with irregular drug use
3. History of sleep apnea syndrome, restless legs syndrome and other sleep disorders
4. Lactating women, pregnant women or women of childbearing age who are planning to become pregnant in a short time
5. Alcoholics and/or psychoactive drug users, drug abusers and dependents
6. Individuals who are afraid or unable to get acupuncture
7. Individuals who take medication or other interventions to sleep regularly for a long time
8. Surgery is scheduled within 1 month

Date of first enrolment

01/03/2023

Date of final enrolment

31/08/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment

China

Study participating centre

Beijing Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine affiliated to Capital Medical University

23 Meishuguanhou Street

Dongcheng District

Beijing

China

100010

Sponsor information

Organisation

Beijing Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine

ROR

<https://ror.org/057vq6e26>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Government

Funder Name

Beijing Municipal Health Commission

Alternative Name(s)

, Beijing Municipal Bureau of Health, Commission municipale de la Santé de Beijing, BMHB

Funding Body Type

Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype

Local government

Location
China

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The datasets generated during the current study will be available upon request from Dr Tingting Ma, tingtingntyy@163.com.

The estimated date of availability is after 30/06/2025.

IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Other files		20/02/2023	No	No	
Other files		20/02/2023	No	No	
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes