

Original Article

Pilot Study on the Role of Facial Acupuncture in Achieving Skin Hydration and Oil Equilibrium

Praveena J¹, Gokulakrishnan², Prabu Narasimman³, Geetanjali Sankar⁴*From, ¹MD Scholar, ³Residential Medical Officer/ Assistant Medical Officer, ⁴Assistant Medical Officer/ HOD (i/c), Department of Acupuncture and Energy Medicine, International Institute of Yoga and Naturopathy Medical Sciences, Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu,**²Reader & Head, Government Yoga and Naturopathy Medical College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.*

ABSTRACT

Healthy, youthful skin profoundly affects confidence and self-esteem. Maintaining a balance between oil and water content is vital for a radiant complexion. However, aging, lifestyle, and environmental factors can disrupt this balance, causing skin dullness and premature aging. Many seek natural, non-invasive interventions like cosmetic acupuncture, rooted in traditional Chinese medicine. Despite its popularity, robust scientific validation remains limited. This study investigates the effectiveness of cosmetic acupuncture in enhancing facial aesthetics. The study included ten women aged 20–35 from the International Institute of Yoga and Naturopathy Medical Sciences, Chengalpattu, randomly assigned to either a Facial Cosmetic Acupuncture (FCA) group (n=5) or a control group (n=5). The FCA group underwent 30-minute treatment sessions twice weekly, while the control group received no intervention. Skin hydration and oil levels were measured using a Facial Skin Analyzer at baseline, weekly during the intervention, and four weeks post-intervention. Subjective changes in appearance were evaluated using the Patient's Aesthetic Improvement Scale (PAIS) and the Global Aesthetic Improvement Scale (GAIS). The FCA group demonstrated significant improvements in skin hydration and oil balance compared to the control group. Increased water content and decreased oil levels were observed, with treatment efficacy varying by age. Subjective assessments from PAIS and GAIS aligned with these findings, as participants reported moderate to substantial improvements in skin appearance. Mechanisms potentially underlying these effects include enhanced collagen synthesis, lymphatic drainage, and aquaporin-3 activation. Facial Cosmetic Acupuncture effectively improves skin hydration and oil balance, offering a non-invasive solution for skin health. This study highlights the need for further research on long-term effects and optimized treatment protocols. The findings underscore FCA's potential as a valuable therapeutic option in promoting skin aesthetics and overall well-being.

Key words: Facial cosmetic acupuncture, skin hydration, oil and water balance, Cosmetic acupuncture

Radiant, healthy skin is essential for enhancing individual confidence and self-worth. The maintenance of a youthful facial appearance necessitates a delicate balance between oil and water content. Various environmental stressors, lifestyle choices, and the natural aging process can disrupt this equilibrium, resulting in premature aging, dissatisfaction, and moisture loss. Healthy skin is indicative of overall well-being and can significantly influence social and professional interactions. When the oil and water levels of facial skin are appropriately regulated, the skin appears vibrant, plump, and resilient. Conversely, imbalances may lead to dullness, acne, and early signs of aging, thereby compromising the skin's natural barrier and increasing susceptibility to external irritants and stressors.

Acupuncture, a traditional Chinese method, employs the insertion of thin needles into specific points on the body to treat pain and illness. Cosmetic acupuncture, or facial acupuncture,

focuses specifically on aesthetic concerns related to the face.

This technique also referred to as Facial Rejuvenation Acupuncture or Facial Revitalizing Acupuncture, is a non-invasive, holistic approach that targets acupuncture points on the face, neck, and ears. It aims to improve the flow of qi, enhance blood circulation, facilitate lymphatic drainage, increase oxygen supply to cells, and potentially delay the aging process [1, 2].

Channels Distribution on the Face

In the context of facial acupuncture, an understanding of the Yang channels is essential for achieving effective therapeutic outcomes. All Yang channels converge at the head and face, areas where Yang energy is particularly concentrated. While the three hand Yang channels ascend towards the head, the three-foot Yang channels direct their energy downward.

Correspondence to: Dr. Praveena J, Department of Acupuncture and Energy Medicine, International Institute of Yoga and Naturopathy Medical Sciences, Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu, India.

Email: drpraveena1997@gmail.com

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Sagging and wrinkles on the face may often result from an surface, with CV 24 being the only Yin point present on the face. This superficial positioning allows for rapid results, as stimulation of these points elicits a more immediate response. This principle aligns with the River Theory, where smaller channels facilitate swifter flows compared to larger bodies of water. Consequently, facial acupuncture, by emphasizing Yang channels, offers acute stimulation that leads to faster and more noticeable improvements. Additionally, the 12 divergent channels converge with the superficial Yang channels, with divergent meridians generally ascending through the heart within the trunk [1, 2]. Giovanni Maciocia's "Foundations of Chinese Medicine" notes that Yin divergents connect with their Yang paired channels, providing another mechanism through which Yin energy supports facial rejuvenation. This aspect contributes to the characterization of acupuncture as an "antigravity technique," targeting selected local points on the face to facilitate skin rejuvenation [1], [4-6].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This pilot study recruited participants from the International Institute of Yoga and Naturopathy Medical Sciences and Chengalpattu Government Medical College and Hospital, Chengalpattu, Tamilnadu, India. Female participants aged 20 to 35 years were included if they exhibited conditions such as dry or oily skin, poor facial tone and texture, and suboptimal muscle tone. Exclusion criteria eliminated those with chronic skin diseases, bleeding disorders, drug-induced acne, or a history of hypersensitivity to facial skin. Pregnant and lactating women, individuals with pacemakers, or those with uncontrolled hypertension, diabetes mellitus, severe migraine, or significant

Table 1: Location and Significance of the selected Acupuncture Points

ACUPUNCTURE POINT	LOCATION	SIGNIFICANCE
EX 1 (Yintang)	Between the eyebrows	Promotes relaxation and improves skin elasticity.
UB 2 (Cuanzhu)	Medial end of the eyebrows	Enhances circulation and reduces puffiness.
ST 3 (Juliao)	Below the eyes on the cheekbone	Tones facial muscles and improves skin texture.
REN 24 (Chengjiang)	Depression at the midpoint of the chin	Enhances overall facial vitality.
LI 20 (Yingxiang)	On either side of the nose	Improves circulation and addresses skin dullness.
TW 23 (Sizhukong)	Outer end of the eyebrows	Alleviates tension and promotes skin rejuvenation.

health conditions were also excluded.

Additionally, participants who had used topical steroids, received Botulinum toxin injections, or undergone cosmetic acupuncture within the past six months were deemed ineligible. A total of 10 participants fitting these criteria were selected and randomly assigned to a Facial Cosmetic Acupuncture (FCA) group (n = 5) or a control group (n = 5). The FCA group received 30-minute acupuncture sessions twice weekly for four weeks with Sujok needles and the selected points are EX 1 (Yintang), UB 2 (Cuanzhu), ST 3 (Juliao), REN 24 (Chengjiang), LI 20 (Yingxiang), and TW 23 (Sizhukong). The control group remained under observation without intervention. This structured methodology ensured a focused evaluation of the intervention's impact on skin hydration and oil balance.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis for this study was conducted using SPSS Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions, were used to summarize the demographic and baseline characteristics of the participants. To assess the effectiveness of cosmetic acupuncture on facial skin hydration and oil content, paired t-tests was employed to compare pre- and post-treatment measurements within the study group. Between-group comparisons of continuous variables will be analyzed using independent t-tests to evaluate differences in skin hydration and oil content between the study and control groups.

For subjective assessments, the data collected through the Patient's Aesthetic Improvement Scale (PAIS) and the Global Aesthetic Improvement Scale (GAIS) is analyzed using graphical representation. Statistical significance was found p-value of <0.05 for the FCA treatment group participants. Additionally, effect sizes are calculated to determine the magnitude of the treatment effects. All statistical tests were conducted with a two-tailed approach to ensure comprehensive evaluation of the outcomes. While the participants under observation, p value of <0.05 which is not significant.

Ethical consideration: A written informed consent was obtained from all the participants after describing indetail about the intervention.

Withdrawal Criteria: All subjects are free to withdraw from participation in the study at any time, for any reason,specified or unspecified, and without prejudice to further treatment. Outcome measures will be determined at baseline (before intervention), every week at the end of the intervention, and 4 weeks after completion of the intervention.

Outcome measures

Primary and secondary outcomes was assessed by measuring the percentage of oil andwater content of face through Facial Skin Analyzer for every end of the week and subjective assessment after the full course of treatment through the Likert's scale analysis – Patient's Aesthetic Improvement Scale

(PAIS) and Global Aesthetic Improvement Scale (GAIS) in both the groups.

RESULTS

This shows that the water and oil content of the face is improved

in the Facial cosmetic acupuncture treatment group and there is no change in the observation group. Also, the Patient Improvement Aesthetic Scale and Global Improvement Aesthetic Scale shows moderate to good improvements in treatment group and no change in the non – treatment group.

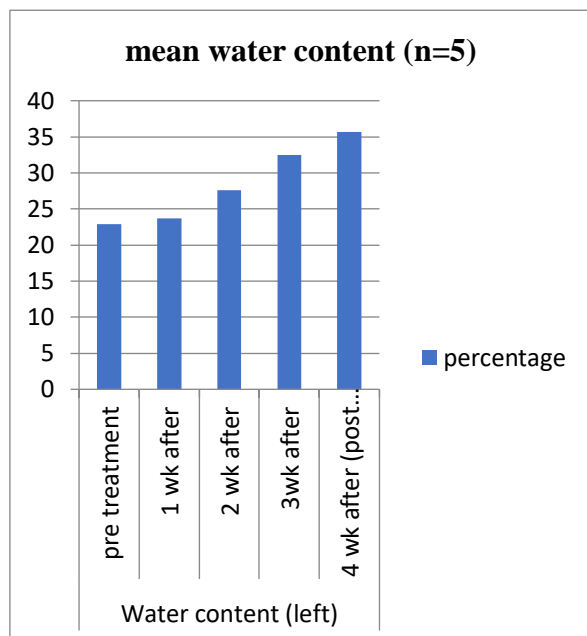


Fig 1

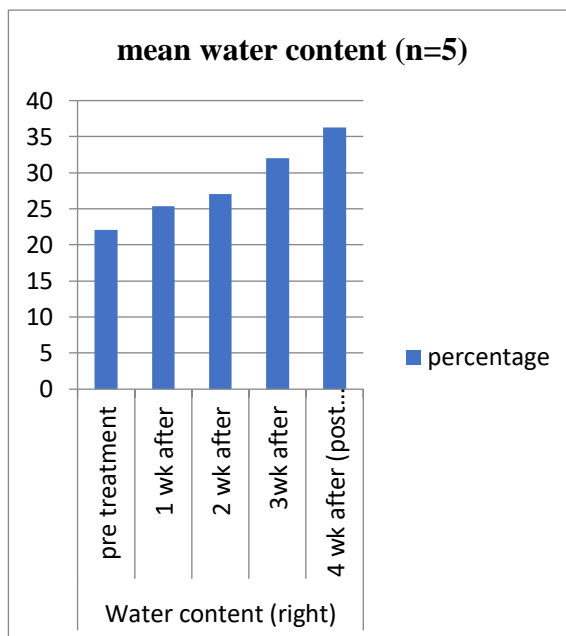


Fig 2

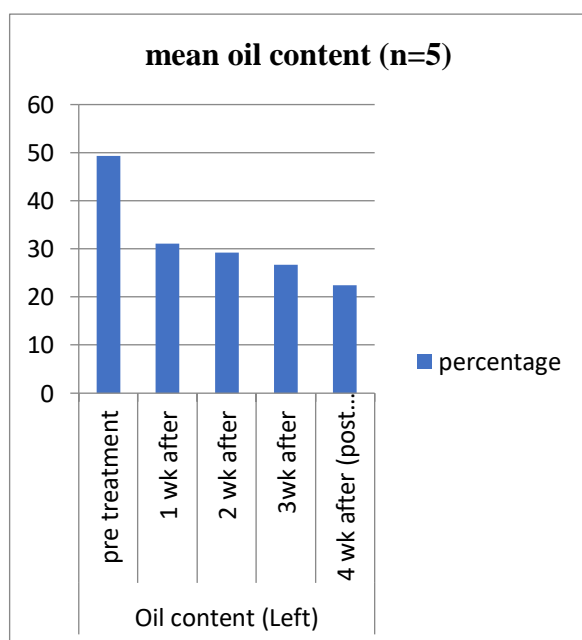


Fig 3

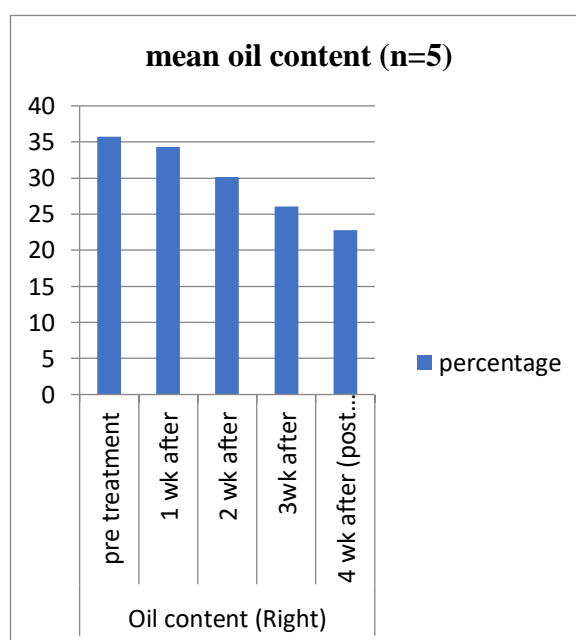


Fig 4

Fig 1 – 4: Graphical representation of the percentage of water and oil content on the mean age of the face on the left and right side (participants underwent FCA treatment)

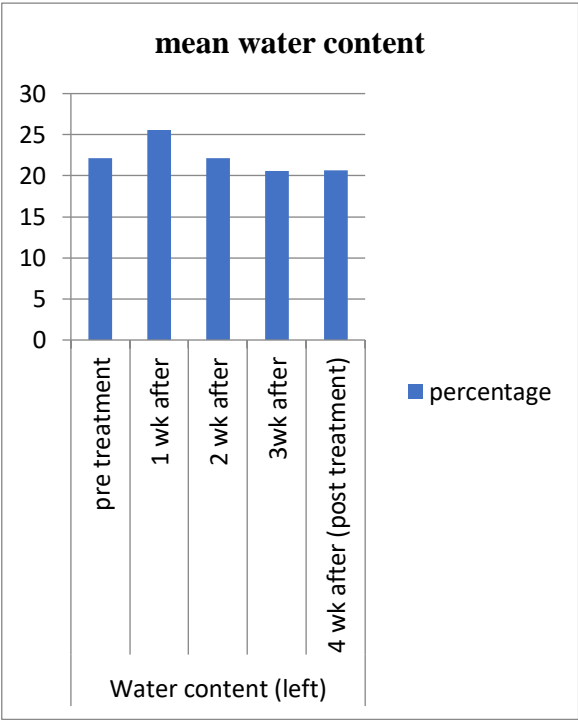


Fig 5

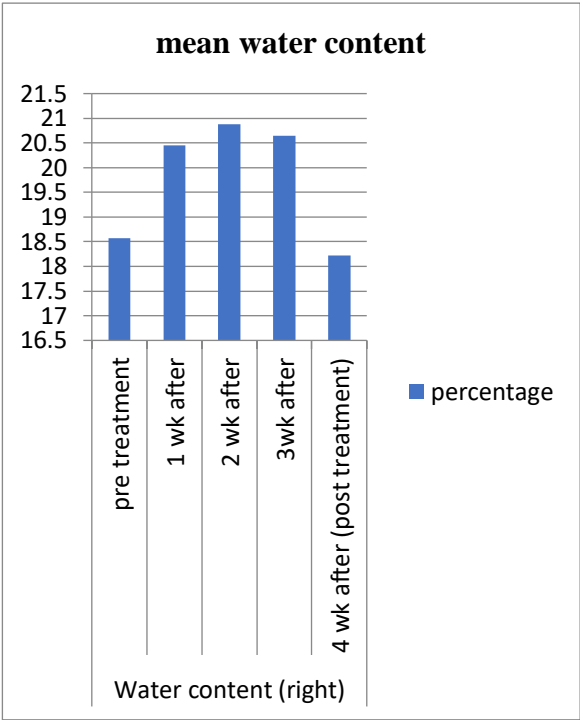


Fig 6

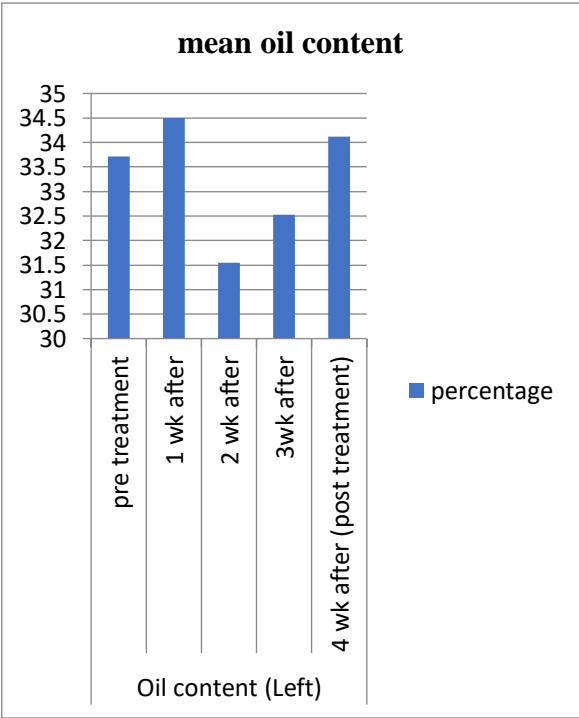


Fig 7

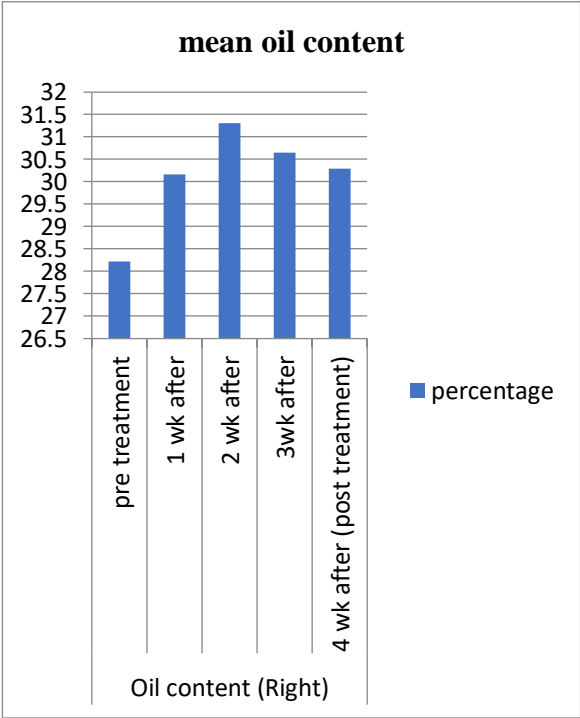


Fig 8

Fig 5 – 8: Graphical representation of the percentage of water and oil content on the mean age of the face on the left and right side (participants who are under observation)

DISCUSSION

Facial cosmetic acupuncture (FCA) has gained recognition as a holistic approach to enhancing skin health and overall well-being. Although it has been practiced for centuries as part of Traditional Chinese Medicine, modern research still lacks a robust evidence base to conclusively affirm its skincare benefits. The minimal risk of adverse events associated with this treatment positions it as a safer, non-invasive, and cost-effective and alternative to Botox. FCA's mechanism of action appears to focus on detoxification and the internal optimization of health, improving the balance of oil and water content through enhanced qi and blood circulation. This process is believed to contribute to a softer, more radiant complexion, reflecting the principle that "outer beauty is the result of inner balance" [1-3].

The skin's ability to retain hydration is crucial for maintaining its health and appearance. Facial cosmetic acupuncture induces micro-trauma to the skin, triggering natural healing responses such as increased collagen production, enhanced blood circulation, and improved qi flow. These physiological processes are vital for maintaining a youthful complexion by balancing oil and water content, nourishing the skin, and reducing conditions like dryness, dullness, and acne. Research highlights the potential of FCA to support this balance, which is essential for achieving smooth, supple, and radiant skin while also mitigating signs of aging [2,4].

FCA's ability to stimulate hormonal responses, including the release of endorphins, ACTH (adrenocorticotrophic hormone), cortisol, and nitric oxide, further underscores its impact on skin vitality. These hormones aid in reducing tension in contracted facial muscles, promoting relaxation, and encouraging collagen and elastin synthesis, which are critical for skin toning and repair. The integration of these processes demonstrates FCA's multifaceted role in restoring skin homeostasis and enhancing overall skin appearance [2, 5, 6]. In addition to its physical benefits, FCA addresses the interplay between emotional and physical health. Negative emotional states often manifest as changes in skin tone, texture, and tension, accelerating the visible signs of aging. By alleviating tension and improving circulation, FCA fosters positive emotional states, vitality, and overall well-being, leading to a rejuvenated appearance. This holistic approach highlights the broader transformative potential of FCA, not only in enhancing skin aesthetics but also in supporting mental and emotional balance [2, 7].

The evaluation of skin hydration and oil levels using a facial skin analyser has become an essential tool in studies examining the efficacy of FCA. Evidence suggests that cosmetic acupuncture balances hydration and oil content while promoting collagen production through controlled micro-trauma. These effects may be particularly beneficial for younger individuals, as skin elasticity begins to decline around

the age of 21. However, the current evidence base is limited by small sample sizes and short intervention periods, indicating the need for larger, multi-centre studies with extended durations to substantiate these findings [7-9].

FCA's capacity to target acupuncture points associated with lymphatic drainage and detoxification further supports its role in reducing edema and enhancing fluid circulation. This comprehensive process improves skin viscosity, balances hormonal irregularities, and addresses conditions such as hormonal acne and uneven oil production. Thus, FCA represents a promising, natural approach to achieving radiant, healthy skin by harmonizing both internal and external factors [10-14]. Limitations of this analysis include the reliance on preliminary data and the absence of large-scale, randomized controlled trials. Future research should prioritize addressing these gaps to provide more definitive evidence regarding FCA's efficacy in promoting facial skin rejuvenation. Such efforts will solidify the role of cosmetic acupuncture as a viable alternative for enhancing skin health and achieving a balanced, glowing complexion.

CONCLUSION

This study presents an experimental trial designed to investigate the effects of facial cosmetic acupuncture on the balance of water and oil content in adult females. The anticipated findings aim to enhance our understanding of the benefits associated with facial cosmetic acupuncture, emphasizing its potential as an effective, non-invasive treatment for improving skin health. Ultimately, this research could pave the way for further studies, positioning facial cosmetic acupuncture as a valuable option within the fields of aesthetics and wellness. By incorporating holistic practices into skincare routines, individuals can achieve not only physical rejuvenation but also emotional well-being, underscoring the significance of a comprehensive approach to health and beauty.

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