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ACUPRESSURE PROVIDES CALMING EFFECTS ON CHILDREN HEADED FOR SURGERY

When a child requires surgery, the final moments on the way to the operating room can be troubling and traumatic times for the young patient and the parents alike. Now some new research at the University of California Irvine may offer a simple and painless solution to providing more peace and tranquility for everyone.

Researchers wanted to find out if the ancient art of Acupressure could have a positive and calming effect on children who were about to go under the knife. They were hoping to find a drug free means of offering sedative-like results without the possible complications and the unwanted after effects of using a pharmaceutical substance.

“Anxiety in children before surgery is bad because of the emotional toll on the child and the parents, and this anxiety can lead to prolonged recovery and the increased use of analgesics for postoperative pain,” said study leader Dr. Zeev Kain. Dr. Kain is an anesthesiologist and the preoperative care chair at UC Irvine. “What’s great about the use of Acupressure is that it costs very little and has no side effects.”

The researchers selected 52 children between the ages of 8 and 17 who were scheduled for endoscopic stomach surgery. Acupressure was applied to half of the children at a known acupoint located midpoint between the eyebrows. This Acupuncture point is known as the Extra-1. The control group of children had Acupressure applied to another location on their forehead that was not linked to a known acupoint.

The Acupressure was supplied through the use of “Adhesive Acupressure Beads” applied to Extra-1 acupoint. (Acupressure beads are a commercially available strip of beads that allow individuals to self-apply Acupressure and get the benefits of the application outside of a professional’s office.)

Thirty minutes after the Acupressure was applied, the children were examined by researchers. What they found was that the children who received pressure on the Extra-1 acupoint showed decreased anxiety levels. In turn, they said, anxiety levels had actually increased in the control group.

“As anesthesiologists, we need to look at all therapeutic opportunities to make the surgical process less stressful for all patients,” said Dr. Kain. “We can’t assume that Western medical approaches are the only viable ones, and we have an obligation to look at integrative treatments like Acupressure as a way to improve the surgery experience.”

Source: The University of California Irvine. “Acupressure Calms Children Before Surgery.” September 2008
http://www.communications.uci.edu/news/release_detail.asp?key=1834