

# **Evaluating the Role of Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine in the Treatment of Mercury Toxicity**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**INTRODUCTION:** Practitioners of Chinese medicine have recognized mercury (Hg) as a toxic element for thousands of years and have warned against the overdose of this element and its potential to cause toxicity in the body. Studies have been shown to link mercury toxicity to multiple disorders, including neurological, nephrological, immunological, cardiac, motor, reproductive and even genetic conditions. Current environmental and medical sources of exposure pose a significant risk to a potentially large population, and therefore safe and effective methods of treatment for mercury toxicity are important to identify and publicize.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study is to gather information about the use of Chinese medicine, acupuncture, and other methods in the treatment of mercury toxicity. The survey used to achieve this goal was designed to compile useful data that would shed light on how this condition is treated by acupuncturists, as well as how it is treated by other medical practitioners in clinical practice

**METHODS:** The study design and methodology were designed to be exploratory and to gather information about a particular field of expertise. In order to formally collect data, this researcher used a single online survey with questions designed for health practitioners. This survey was used to gather general information and knowledge from and experiences of medical practitioners with expertise in treating mercury toxicity as well as from those who do not treat mercury toxicity. For practitioners who treat mercury toxicity, more specific questions were asked to gather information relating to the protocols used, case management strategies, the role of acupuncture and TCM, integrative approaches, and training.

**RESULTS:** The findings indicate that there is no uniform method for treating mercury toxicity, nor for evaluating patients for diagnosis or assessing effectiveness of treatment. There is some evidence to suggest that acupuncture and Chinese medicine can be useful in the treatment of this condition, and that there are some weaknesses in existing treatment methods that may be improved by utilizing acupuncture and Chinese medicine. However, the data suggests that a small percentage of acupuncturists are currently treating this condition, and the majority of acupuncturists lack education regarding this health issue. Additionally, training methods for learning to treat mercury toxicity do not appear to be uniform.

**CONCLUSION:** The most important finding in this study is arguably the lack of education provided to licensed acupuncturists in relation to this subject. The data indicates a need for further education about mercury toxicity among acupuncturists, who may then be equipped provide a significant support to patients undergoing or seeking treatment for this condition.

**APA FORMAT 250 WORDS:**

Studies have been shown to link mercury toxicity to numerous health risks and conditions. Current sources of exposure pose a significant risk to a potentially large population, and therefore, safe and effective methods of treatment for mercury toxicity are important to identify. The purpose of this study was to gather exploratory information about the use of Chinese medicine, acupuncture, and other methods in the treatment of mercury toxicity. An online survey created by the researcher was distributed to health practitioners in order to gather information relating to the protocols used for treatment, case management strategies, the role of acupuncture and TCM, integrative approaches, and training. The findings indicated that there is no uniform method for treating mercury toxicity, nor for evaluating patients for diagnosis or assessing effectiveness of treatment. There is some evidence to suggest that acupuncture and Chinese medicine can be useful in the treatment of this condition, and that there are some weaknesses in existing treatment methods that may be improved by utilizing acupuncture and Chinese medicine. However, the findings suggest that only a small percentage of acupuncturists are currently treating this condition, and the majority of acupuncturists lack education regarding this health issue. The results indicate a need for further education about mercury toxicity among acupuncturists, who may then be equipped to provide significant support to patients undergoing or seeking treatment for this condition.

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