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## **Bell's Palsy Patient's Experience in Undergoing Acupuncture at Regional Public Service Agency Acupuncture Polyclinic Abepura Hospital Papua Province**

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### **Abstract**

Acupuncture is one of the alternative complementary treatments for the community in handling diseases including Bell's Palsy. Acupuncture therapy services at Abepura Hospital are one of the hospitals that serve acupuncture. The purpose of the study was to determine the experience of Bell's Palsy patients in undergoing acupuncture at the Acupuncture Polyclinic, Abepura Hospital, Papua Province. This type of qualitative research with 5 informants. Data was obtained using in-depth interviews. The data is analyzed qualitatively. The experience was obtained based on the diagnosis, initially, the informant did not know Bell's Palsy disease and after conducting an examination, and directed by a neurologist for acupuncture therapy. The experience of physical changes is that initially the informant experiences symptoms such as stiffness, facial tilt, and soreness in the facial area, and after acupuncture, the informant feels healed. Psychologically, informants are grateful because there are changes, namely healing, calmer, and relaxed. Severe and moderate side effects are not felt by informants, only mild side effects such as pain and bruises disappear on their own.

**Keywords:** Experience; Acupuncture Therapy; Bell's Palsy Patient.

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### 1. Introduction

Acupuncture is part of traditional health services that are integrated with health services and are available in traditional clinics and also performed in hospitals [1] Medical acupuncture treatment is done based on the patient's medical diagnosis. The selection of acupuncture point combinations and therapeutic targets is the result of a review of various studies [2. Medical acupuncture is part of physical medicine, based on neuroscience and evidence-based [3]

Medical Acupuncture services are based on service standards for general practitioners with basic medical acupuncture competencies that already have evidence-based, and Bell's Palsy is one of the diseases that can be treated with acupuncture [4] Cases of Bell's palsy in Indonesia amounted to 19.55% incidence rate increases with age after 60 years Around 60-85% there are 30% who are disabled for life, due to patients not getting better for 4 months [5].

Research in the United States found Bell's Palsy is responsible for about 80% of facial mononeuropathy and affects 11.5 to 40.2/100,000 people per year with peak incidence usually between the ages of 15 and 50 years and 1 in 60 patients suffering a lifetime risk [6].

Numerous studies have suggested acupuncture for the therapy of Bell's Palsy. Professor Xin-Shu Zhang in Shanghai, China 1975 discovered wrist acupuncture (WAA)[7]. Another researcher Nurbani, R., Helianthi, D.R., (2021) in his case study entitled "Wrist Ankle Acupuncture (WAA) and Body Acupuncture Accelerates Neurorehabilitation in Bell's Palsy," showed that combination therapy of body acupuncture, WAA, and ear acupuncture can improve the recovery of Bell's Palsy [8]. The purpose of the study was to explore the Experience of Bell's Palsy Patients Undergoing Acupuncture at the Acupuncture Polyclinic of Abepura Hospital, Papua Province

### 2. Methods

This type of research uses qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach. Creswell quoted Eddles-Hirsch (2015) who stated that qualitative research is a study that is interested in analyzing and describing the experience of an individual phenomenon [9]. As many as 5 informants were taken with purposive sampling techniques. This study only used 5 informants which is a weakness of this study because sufferers of Bell's Palsy are limited.

### 3. Research results

**Table 1:** Characteristics of informants

Number	Informants	Age (Years)	Gender	Education	Work	Case Therapy
1	A	years	male	Upper High School	State Officer	phased series
2	B	years	male	Upper High School	Private	series
3	C	years	male	Diploma	State Officer	less than 1 series
4	D	Years	male	Bachelor	Housewives	series, for face 4 visits
5	E	years	male	Bachelor	State Officer	visits

Based on the results of the study, it was found that from 5 informants, it was known that experience based on the diagnosis of all informants stated that initially they did not know Bell's Palsy disease, and after examination and directed by a neurologist for acupuncture therapy. Here are the results of the interview:

*IN 2: "Before acupuncture therapy. I went to a neurologist., Previously the estimate of only eye and tooth pain turned out... from... what.. before going to the Puskesmas, the Puskesmas said try to.. The hospital asked the neurologist... apparently... It is said that there is inflammation of the seventh nerve that makes the right part of the face not function properly, only the left part is functioning.*

Some informants do not have adequate knowledge of this therapy, while others obtain information from various sources, such as doctor referrals, friend advice, previous personal experiences, and reading literature. This difference shows the complexity of disseminating information about acupuncture therapy:

*IN 1: "The therapy with the use of needles"*

*IN 2: "If you've never heard of it for the first time... aa'.. continue to fit .. yes we said what.. Bell's Palsy... yesterday, ee.. friends too... from friends also recommended for acupuncture therapy.. because he was also affected before and he was also acupuncture therapy"*

*IN 3: "Don't know, that day. that time before going to acupuncture, I had heard advice also from the doctor to go to acupuncture, just because I was afraid that I chose to light."*

The informant's experience of physical changes experienced before acupuncture therapy is known that after receiving acupuncture therapy provides effective healing against the disease suffered and experiencing physical improvement.

*IN 1 : "In the seventh session of the Doctor there was a change... the rigid is no longer rigid... the pain has decreased... lighter face... continue to the face can return to normal..."*

*IN 2 : there is an eighty percent change... Changes to the Session. Eight... seven.. eight... Ee.. sixth to... to Nine and.. Twelfth*

*IN 3 :a face of sense of calm... which was tense before, so it feels good... taste good so....more rilex.*

*IN 4 : I get stabbed sometimes there is a slight tingling like that.. that's it.. but henceforth no.. nothing ordinary.. fine then.. but indeed aches, doctor*

*IN 5: I had a slightly dizzy head that had improved, then for allergies there was none, swollen swelling means that because there is a needle entering the body there must be a wound.*

The experience of psychological change informants are grateful because there are changes that are healed and patients feel calmer and relaxed. The psychological changes felt by the informant were the sensations felt during acupuncture, after undergoing acupuncture therapy, and the number of therapy sessions undertaken for the effect of improvement. Psychological changes some informants feel grateful, calmer, and more relaxed.

IN 1: *"Praise God acupuncture needles can heal in my healing"*

IN 2: *it's true that this has a very change. There's a change... Feelings must be easy*

IN 3: *...next... I taste tu... me a sense of calm... And situ I just understood ,, actually acupuncture is excellent, in my opinion, it is like that and to this day I still taste and later I have come back again if I have to therapy again*

IN 4: *tired... moreover, the journey is quite far, doc, yes from Sentani to Abepura. So.. sometimes I ride a motorcycle... let it be fast.. That's it, the heat goes there... ups and downs, doc tired. It seems that if you finish acupuncture you have to rest, you have to be relaxed... One hour and two hours just feel good.*

IN 5: *praise God is getting relaxed, then calm down... it means fresh, it doesn't feel heavy before.*

The experience of side effects is not moderate or severe side effects but mild side effects that are temporary in the process of acupuncture therapy such as pain and disappear on their own. The informant's experience as quoted from the following interview:

IN 1: *There is swelling and bruising, treated thrombopop gel*

IN 2: *From the time I went through the acupuncture to the end, there were no side effects... safe doctor.*

IN 3: *Side effects are usually bruises doctor, but rarely yesterday the time ran out of therapy with doctors. But if it is bruised.. once. Overcoming it, just silence, doctor Leave it alone, later he will disappear himself. Even if you want to use ointment maybe, but I rarely, usually just let it sit for how many days it disappears once the doctor.*

IN 4: *There is no swelling, but if there is swollen maybe time that I have consulted a doctor because of the doctor or asked the doctor*

IN 5: *no side effects, at least only a little pain when inserting the needle*

#### **4. Discussion**

##### ***4.1 Experience in the diagnosis process***

Bell's palsy is idiopathic facial nerve paralysis and is the most common peripheral facial nerve paralysis. Bell's palsy is caused by an acute, nonspecific inflammatory lesion of the cranial nerves whose cause is unknown. Symptoms of Bell's palsy include unilateral facial muscle stiffness, numbness, paralysis, absence of wrinkles on the forehead, inability to close the eyes, lacrimation, loss of nasolabial folds, drooping corners of the mouth, inability to frown, close eyes, grin or fight. In the early stages, some patients may experience pain behind the ear, hearing becomes overly sensitive, or loss of taste sensation in the front 2/3 of the tongue. This disease in addition to causing physical impacts, also interferes with social and psychological problems of sufferers. In pregnant women can also affect fetal health [10].

Based on the results of the study, it was found that the informant did not know about Bell's Palsy from the symptoms he

experienced. The informant found out about Bell's Palsy after a diagnosis by an acupuncture therapist. This shows that informants' understanding of acupuncture in medicine, especially the treatment of Bell's palsy, is still not widely known by the public.

In line with the research of Abdullah and Yuliana (2015), public understanding of acupuncture is not yet known in general which can be used to treat diseases, so it is expected that the public will add information about the usefulness of acupuncture for other diseases. Patients with positive treatment experiences (such as good service, and easy-to-understand doctor's explanations) are more likely to search for health information online to find out more about their condition [11].

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Acupuncture is an act of inserting or inserting needles into the body and providing manipulation at certain points in the body to achieve therapeutic goals. Acupuncture therapy aims to cure diseases by removing the blockade of qi flow to restore the balance of yin and yang energy [12].

The informant did not know the disease suffered. Disease and therapy information is mostly obtained after treatment. Information is an important part of knowledge. Knowledge is the result of understanding, which occurs after a person experiences sensing of a particular object Most human knowledge is acquired through the senses of sight and hearing, or cognitive processes. It has a significant role in shaping a person's actions [13].

Patients with positive treatment experiences (such as good service, and easy-to-understand doctor's explanations) are more likely to seek health information online to learn more about their condition.[14]

#### ***4.2 Experience in physical changes***

An advanced symptom of Bell's Palsy in the eye is lagophthalmos, or the inability to close the eye completely. The oculi orbicular muscle cannot perform eyelid closure. With a reduced ability to blink and close the eyelids, increased exposure of the corneal surface to the outside world and interference from the tear film puts the eye at risk for keratitis, corneal ulceration, and potentially vision loss. [15].

Acupuncture therapy is generally done 2-3 times per week depending on the state of the disease until it achieves the expected results. One series of treatments consists of 10-12 times and if needed the next series with interseries intervals ranging from 1-2 weeks [2].

The results of therapy given to informants after several times getting therapy for bells palsy began to decrease even until cured reached 80-95%. In addition, in acupuncture therapy, patients do not experience allergies or swelling from acupuncture actions. Another experience in the process of acupuncture therapy informant said that his limbs moved on their own during acupuncture therapy.

Acupuncture points are believed to stimulate the central nervous system, thereby causing the release of chemicals into the muscles, spinal cord, and brain. These biochemical changes are thought to enhance the body's natural healing abilities and improve physical and emotional well-being.

Facial acupuncture points are preferred at or near the location of acupuncture points, especially in areas that are disturbed by movement. The collection of activated nerves and neuroactive components distributed in the skin, muscles, and connective tissue around the inserted needle is defined as a neural acupuncture unit (NAU). Neuroactive components include mast cells, blood vessels rich in sympathetic nerves, and small lymphatic vessels. In addition, mast cells release many neuroactive mediators, including histamine, substance P(SP), and other immune factors through degranulation mechanisms in response to acupuncture stimulation, other nonneuronal cells, including macrophages, fibroblasts, lymphocytes, platelets, and keratinocytes are also involved in modulating local and afferent signals from NAU. These cells release a wide range, of transmitters, modulators, and inflammatory and immune factors, which directly or indirectly act on the corresponding receptors on the surface of peripheral afferent fibers. To stimulate this nerve acupuncture unit effectively use electroacupuncture. This modality provides clinically significant efficacy in peripheral facial paralysis and there is no significant difference in efficacy among the various waveforms. This is especially true for muscles under continuous tonic contraction. Inhibition of muscle tone by acupuncture stimulation may be related to the functional restoration of the facial nerve and associated muscles [8].

Other experiences of physical changes experienced by informants comparing the effectiveness of acupuncture therapy helped speed up the recovery process compared to other therapies that informants followed such as physiotherapy and light therapy.

In line with Hartono's research (2018), the effectiveness of acupuncture on the recovery of Bell's Palsy patients is very satisfactory because most patients have been treated with other therapies but have not improved. With acupuncture therapy 4 times there is a better healing process [16].

#### ***4.3 Experience in overcoming fear***

The results of the study were obtained by the informant against his fear because Inigin recovered. The fear of time is caused by the fear of acupuncture needles. However, after the informant compared it with previous therapies that did not obtain results and a strong desire to heal, so with his intention and determination against the fear of needles to undergo acupuncture therapy to heal and from experience in the process of acupuncture therapy, the informant expressed comfort. According to Rifki the benefits of acupuncture are a community need where the motivation from within is in the form of motivation for healing. Meanwhile, it takes a lot of needles and a long time ( $\pm$  30 minutes) when acupuncture so feeling discomfort also hurts the body, this is not the situation of most respondents because they are quite comfortable with the acupuncture needles used and when the needles are left on the head do not feel pain [17]. In addition, Santalia Tondok's

(2023) research that there is a significant relationship between the effect of acupuncture therapy on reducing hemiplegia shoulder pain in stroke patients[18].

The results of the interview concluded that the fear experienced by the informant was a cost problem because acupuncture therapy requires a repeated process once a week or once a month and in this therapy the informant gets an additional burden from the amount of acupuncture therapy given. The more therapy given, the more costs incurred by the informant so to overcome this, the informant performs therapy once a month according to his income for a month.

Details of the cost of acupuncture therapy at BLUD RSUD Abepura are for small actions of Rp. 80,000, medium actions of Rp. 160,000 and large actions of Rp. 325,000 and special actions of Rp. 650,000. Bell's palsy is a special action in acupuncture therapy at BLUD RSUD Abepura.

The fear experienced by the informant with costs so that after getting therapy, namely 3 series, 2 series, and for the face 4 visits the effort made was to do informant therapy, borrow medical expenses from neighbors, and minimize medical costs from the salary he earned every month by reducing his therapy schedule.

Patients who have never done alternative medicine and performed treatment in the hospital, cannot compare the efficacy of alternative medicine and treatment in the hospital. There are limitations in social interaction experienced by patients due to limited experience of treatment in health care settings. Economic factors influence the choice of treatment site [19].

Acupuncture is a non-pharmacological therapy that has been widely used with minimal side effects to treat cases of anxiety disorders. There have been many published studies that show the effectiveness of acupuncture therapy in cases of anxiety disorders. The mechanism of action of acupuncture in anxiety disorders is through the regulation of the autonomic nervous system and hormonal and brain neurotransmitters, and acupuncture is proven to improve sleep quality [20].

The results of this study proved that informants felt comfortable after getting acupuncture therapy so this comfort made the fear of patients did not become actual with acupuncture therapy instead increasing the motivation of informants in acupuncture therapy treatme

#### ***4.4. Experience in psychological change***

Psychological changes from the experience of the acupuncture therapy process are felt by informants who undergo acupuncture therapy by thanking God Almighty because acupuncture therapy provides changes to the health problems they experience into coverage to provide a sense of calm and relaxation and the expected results bring psychological changes of informants in a better direction.

In line with Shloiha's research (2021) getting the benefits of acupuncture therapy brings psychological changes to the patient's recovery. In addition to service satisfaction, it is influenced by the quality of the performance of officers or workers to customers or casein after obtaining or obtaining such treatment [21]. Measurement of the quality of health services in a health service both in hospitals and clinics can be reflected in the perception of patients who have obtained these health services. Patient perception of service quality is a comprehensive assessment of the excellence of a service or service [22].

Humans are cultural-spiritual bio-psycho-socio beings, and these elements influence each other. Abnormal and normal mental processes and their influence on behavior are psychological approaches. The need for this is met by alternative medicine so that patients can better control their disease [23]. The psychological aspect will affect emotions that have a close effect on the physical state [13].

Medical treatment takes a long time. This causes sufferers to feel bored playing the role of patients and want to end up healing immediately. This often causes patients to switch to other treatment alternatives such as acupuncture, so that the healing process can be faster or to ease the pain suffered [19].

Clinical trials have found that acupuncture is at least as effective as corticosteroids in treating Bells Palsy and that electroacupuncture therapy in Zusanli ST36 rat acupuncture points can restore balance to the Th1/Th2/Th17/Treg helper T cell response by stimulating the hypothalamus to increase ACTH production. This is important because the hypothalamus is considered the main regulator of various physiological and pathophysiological processes including emotions, autonomic activity, and pain.  $\beta$ -endorphins are important opioids in the brain, and electroacupuncture stimulation can produce analgesic effects by activating ACTH and/or the release of beta-endorphins by the brain resulting in increased hormone release. In this case, ACTH and ST36 points can be used to reduce inflammation, just like steroids. Although, the cause of BP is unknown viral infections, vascular ischemia, or autoimmune diseases have been postulated as possible pathomechanisms [8].

Changes experienced by patients with the effectiveness of perceived health cause positive psychological changes to accelerate healing and activate patients in utilizing acupuncture services and become advanced information for people around informants about acupuncture treatment.

#### ***4.5 Experience in overcoming side effects***

Side effects that may occur in acupuncture therapy are generally mild. Discomfort at the site of the matchmaking and bruising are the most commonly reported side effects [24]. Acupuncture therapy is a safe therapy with minimal side effects [25].

The results of the study obtained that the side effects of acupuncture therapy from the patient's statement did not find any moderate or severe side effects but temporary side effects during the therapy process such as pain when pricked by a needle. In addition, there is a bruise on the area where acupuncture needles are inserted, and will disappear within a few days after therapy. But one informant used ointment to overcome the bruise by using ointment

Acupuncture is a nonpharmacological therapeutic modality with few side effects, performed using stimulation of specific areas of the body called acupuncture points [26]. Stimulation of acupuncture points can be done manually, using low-voltage electricity, by heating, thread planting, laser, ultrasound, and so on [27]. Stimulation of acupuncture points can trigger various biological reactions in the body, either at the site of stimulation, such as redness around the skin, or away from the site of stimulation, such as in the nerve tissue and brain [28].

There is no high-quality evidence showing significant benefit (in terms of producing complete recovery of Belss palsy from physical therapy treatment or therapy with antiviral anti-herpes simplex when compared to placebo).



Acupuncture is used widely for Belss palsy in Asian countries such as Turkey. This is a low-risk therapy for Bels's palsy Reference [29].

Acupuncture may be beneficial for Belss palsy, but the quality of relevant trials is insufficient to allow clear conclusions about its efficacy [30]. Acupuncture can be beneficial as an alternative treatment for Bels's palsy without side effects. However, further research with high-quality trials is needed to demonstrate the efficacy of acupuncture [31].

Acupuncture therapy can speed up recovery time and decrease frequent residual symptoms therefore acupuncture therapy should be considered as a therapeutic option for Belss palsy patients [32]. The manifestations of Belss palsy symptoms vary, and the prognosis depends on the symptoms. Acupuncture therapy, tailored to the specific presentation of each patient, can therefore have a profound impact on recovery and long-term prognosis [33].

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