

# Constitutional Facial Acupuncture: The New Protocols

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There is a growing demand for an organic, natural process of aging that involves not only the treatment of the body, but also the recognition of the mind/spirit connection in the healing process. Constitutional Facial Acupuncture, both an ancient and a revolutionary system, fills this demand, because it links inner beauty and radiance with outer physical balance.

Therefore, by integrating these protocols into your practice, you will be able to offer your patients a comprehensive constitutional treatment which is anything but cosmetic, one which views the face as a mirror of the overall health and well-being of the body. It is necessary for us to achieve more than a pretty face as a result of our efforts; my approach seeks to *transform and renew* the original essence and beauty of life.

## THE THREE LEVELS OF CONSTITUTIONAL TREATMENT

What distinguishes Constitutional Facial Acupuncture from other treatment modalities is the strong constitutional component. It is not a 'face lift', because those words do not take into account the constitutional roots and fundamental principles of Chinese medicine.

When you utilize a constitutional approach to facial acupuncture, incorporating the Jing, Ying and Wei, you will be addressing the entirety of your patient's being.

### The Jing Level

We will begin by examining the Jing level of these treatments, which targets the Eight Extraordinary meridians, hereditary factors, and their relationship to the endocrine system.

The English acupuncturist, Royston Low, in his book, *The Secondary Vessels of Acupuncture*<sup>1</sup>, states that 'the Eight Extraordinary Meridians, which work at the genetic level, influence and control the production of hormones in the body.'

For example, Chong Mai (Sp 4 Gongsun) and Yin Wei Mai (PC 6 Neiguan) are used to address hereditary imbalances. In Chinese medicine, ancestral *qi* is considered to be stored in the

kidneys and *Chong Mai* has its point of origin in this organ. However, according to Low, due to its symptomatology, *Chong Mai* may, in fact, arise in the adrenal medulla. Low<sup>1</sup> says that 'the hormone concerned is adrenalin, which has sympathetico-mimetic action, and its use is therefore indicated in cases of organ insufficiency, especially in the Heart.' *Yin Wei Mai* has two actions: hormonally, it affects both the thyroid gland and the nervous system via Ren-22 Tiantu. Other recommended points are Liv-14 Qimen and Sp-13 Fushe, Sp-15 Daheng and Sp-16 Fuai.

In the *Ling Shu*, the *Chong Mai* is described as the 'Sea of Blood.' The points are Bl-11 Dazhu, St-37 Shangjuxu and St 39 Xiajuxu. Symptoms of these points embrace a subjective feeling of fullness in the body (excess blood) and a 'smallness' in the body (deficient blood).

*Chong Mai* clearly relates to blood; in chapter 65 of the *Ling Shu*, there is an interesting discussion about the fact that the *Chong Mai* pathway encircles the lips and mouth. It states that, because women have sufficient *Qi*, but not enough blood, they do not have moustaches or beards. Whereas the eunuch, having lost the generative organs, does not have facial hair, because *Chong Mai* can no longer nourish the mouth. This illustrates the relationship of Chong Mai and other Eight Extraordinary Meridians to the endocrine system.

### The Ying Level

The Ying level, which targets post-natal Qi and utilizes the Twelve Regular Meridians in the Constitutional Facial Acupuncture protocol, is the second constituent of this three-pronged constitutional approach. The focus here is on nutrition, diet, exercise, sleep patterns, rest and relaxation, creative and emotional expression, and spiritual awareness.

While Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) diagnostics focus on Qi, blood and fluids to address this level (the Ying), I also integrate it with the Five Elements and their interaction with the pathology of the Twelve Regulars.

**This particular constitutional treatment is based upon Japanese acupuncture:**

The Lung is described as the tender organ, and it rules protective Wei Qi and the immune system. Patients with lowered immunity tend to catch colds and flu more readily than others, and they lack the ability to shake these illnesses once they have contracted them. If the pathogen penetrates deeper into their bodies, imbalances such as asthma, bronchitis and strep throat can manifest.

**Immune System Imbalances**

Treatment Points	Nagano-sensei’s immune points: Triple Intestine 10
Locations	Nagano-sensei’s LI 10/11 point, named Triple Intestine 10 by Kiiko Matsumoto, is located between the TCM LI 10 Shousanli and TCM LI 11 Quichu, close to the Triple Heater meridian
Needling Protocol	Insert the needle bilaterally 90 degrees and angle it toward the Triple Heater meridian. Make sure your patient has their elbows bent, placed over the solar plexus, with the palms facing the body. You can add 6-7 thread moxa cones or use direct moxa with Shiunko ointment.  Be aware that you can insert more than one needle if you find multiple knots and tension at this point.
Indications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak immune system;</li> <li>• Swollen lymph nodes;</li> <li>• Recurring colds, flu, sore throat;</li> <li>• Weak connective tissue and ligaments</li> </ul>
Comments	When a patient suffers from frequent colds, influenza, allergies, a cough, rhinitis, or sinusitis, exhibits a floating or deficient Lung pulse, or complains of tennis elbow or tendonitis, integrate TI-10 into your constitutional treatment protocol.  Needle and/or moxa TI-10 during the treatment, and then apply Japanese magnets to these points after the session to give continued support to the patient’s immune system.

**The Wei Level**

The Wei Level releases the exterior and is within the purview of the tendino-muscular meridians (TMM). These particular vessels are referred to as tendino-muscular because their symptoms are usually limited to muscle, ligament and joint problems.

Tight tender, trigger, motor or ‘ashi’ points are identified through an assessment of the patient’s symptoms, and through

palpation. It is possible to release a tight shoulder, with tension localized around the GB-21 Jianjing.

**“Coat Hanger” Syndrome**

This syndrome involves the upper trapezius muscle. The patient resembles a coat hanger, because their shoulders are elevated to their ears, and they appear to have no neck. Obviously, these individuals are very tense, tight, frustrated, stressed, and feel as if they are carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders.

Muscle	The upper trapezius muscle elevates the shoulder, bends the neck and head to the same side, and aids in the rotation of the head to the opposite side. GB-21 Jianjing treats the anterior muscle fibers.
Treatment point	GB-21 Jianjing is located midway between Du-14 Dazhui and the acromium at the highest point of the shoulder.
Indications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It relaxes the muscles, treats shoulder pain and tension;</li> <li>• Promotes lactation;</li> <li>• The patient senses a great weight and responsibility on their shoulders;</li> <li>• Contraindicated for pregnancy</li> </ul>
Treatment point	TH-15 Tianliao is located on the superior angle of the scapula, midway between GB-21 Jianjing and SI-13 Quyuan. TH-15 Tianliao treats the posterior muscle fibers.
Indications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neck and shoulder stiffness and pain;</li> <li>• Temporal headache;</li> <li>• An alternative name for this point is Tianting, and it can be used to treat patients who neither take time to listen to their inner voice, nor to process events that occur within their lives</li> </ul>
Signs and symptoms	The indications for this trigger point are similar to GB-21 Jianjing: shoulder and neck pain, a tension headache referring pain to the temple and behind the eye, and emotional stress and frustration.
Trigger point palpation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pincer grasp the upper trapezius muscle between your thumb and fingers, so that it is safely lifted off the top of the lung, to prevent pneumothorax;</li> <li>• Palpate it by rolling the muscle bands between your fingers; this action may elicit a twitch or jump response in the muscle, which will help you locate the trigger point area prior to needling. The patient will report referred pain in the neck, occiput, temple or behind the eye as you palpate.</li> </ul>

Trigger point needling techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needle transversely into the muscle with a 38 or 36 gauge, 30-40 mm needle;</li> <li>• Do not use a thinner needle. Insert the needle for both the anterior fibers of the trapezius muscle, GB-21 Jianjing toward TH-15 Tianliao, and the posterior fibers of the muscle, TH-15 Tianliao toward GB-21 Jianjing, directly into the trapezius muscle;</li> <li>• When treating the back, needle the posterior fibers; when treating the front of the body, treat the anterior fibers;</li> <li>• Once the trigger point is located, continue the pincer grasp with your non-dominant hand, and needle transversely 0.5 cun directly into the muscle;</li> <li>• Utilize a pecking, thrusting technique, which positively irritates the muscle sufficiently, until it releases, jumps or twitches;</li> <li>• Peck directly into the muscle, only stopping for a second to allow the muscle a moment's rest, then begin again. This tricks the muscle, and allows old holding, tightening patterns to release, not only physically, but also emotionally;</li> <li>• If there is any discomfort for the patient, please stop after the next release, and do not persist. Massage arnica into the area, and inform them that they may feel a bit sore, similar the achiness felt after a workout session;</li> <li>• Do not needle downward toward the lung, but transversely down toward the massage table. If this treatment is new to you, do ask a teacher who is conversant with trigger points to help you with the techniques.</li> </ul>
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After the constitution has been addressed, the face can be treated.

**The Face:** The Most Emotive Part of the Body

The face is an organic calling card that allows us to communicate and connect with our fellow human beings. This non-verbal communication telegraphs to the world what we think, how we feel, and how we react to inner and outer stimuli. By interpreting our facial expressions, our friends, loved ones, acquaintances, and even strangers are alerted to the ebb and flow of our emotional states prior to the actual voicing of anger, frustration, sadness or joy.

The face can also indicate a healthy constitution and the emotional well-being of the patient. In my experience, in the ShenMind, a thought or feeling is the precursor to a facial line, wrinkle, mark or discoloration. Where these lines are formed depends upon Chinese physiognomy, the Five Element

emotion, organ imbalances, and the movement and intensity of the facial muscles made to express these emotions.

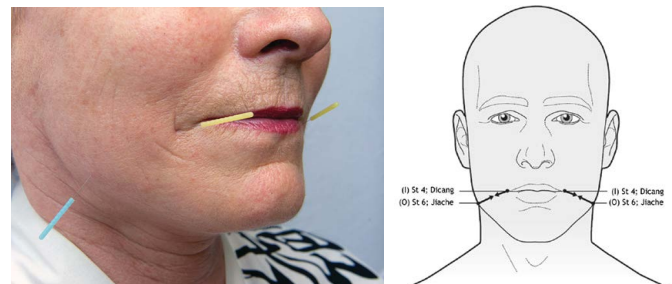
The Origin and Insertion of the Facial Muscles

The origin of the muscle is the beginning of the muscle, because it is usually attached to the bone. This origin anchors the muscle, and it is needled first in Constitutional Facial Acupuncture treatments.

The insertion of the muscle attaches to the skin or muscle fibers, and is needled after the muscle origin. The insertion attachment supports muscle movement in making facial expressions, and allows the face to be mobile and flexible.

Each muscle has a specific function, range and direction of motion, associated emotion and specific wrinkles formed by repetitive and habitual movements.

**The Grin:** Droopy Mouth



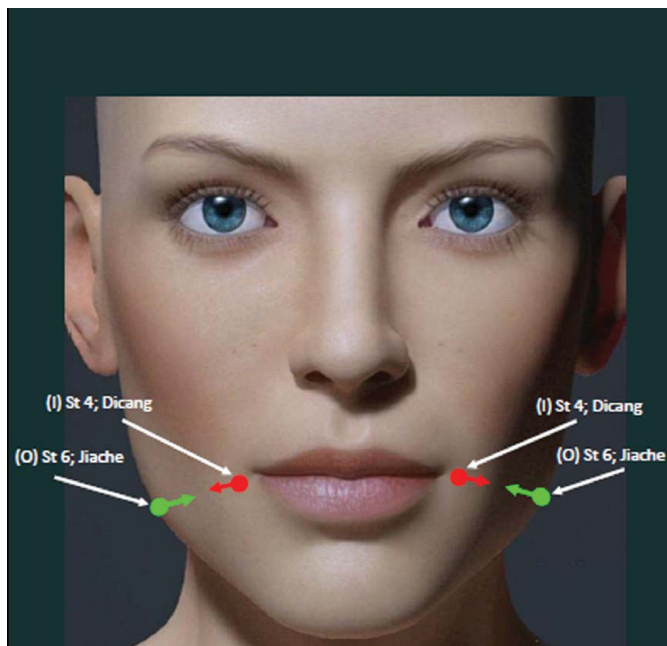
This area of the face represents the corner of the mouth and the risorius muscle, which retracts the angle of the mouth outward, as in grinning.

In Chinese face reading, it is well known as the courtesan's or concubine's smile. In ancient China, the Emperor only chose young women with upturned mouths because he knew that these young ladies would be more satisfied and happy with him. The downturned mouth could be trouble and definitely not as fun as their grinning counterparts, while an upturned mouth, with a Cheshire Cat grin and a playful twinkle in the eyes, radiated an aura of mystery.

**Emotion:** In an unbalanced state, where the mouth droops downward, the emotions expressed are unhappiness, disappointment, sadness and melancholy. The person wearing this expression is just beginning to be dissatisfied, and is not yet depressed, deeply unhappy or grieving.

**Lines and wrinkles:** As a consequence of this emotion, small lines, creases or parentheses form vertically at the corners of the mouth. The mouth may turn down slightly before these lines appear. If the sadness goes unchecked, larger marionette or puppet lines could travel down the side of the mouth to meet under the chin in a virtual goatee. Usually this patient hasn't smiled in a long while, and has developed an unconscious habit of frowning. Needling the face energizes and engages the

muscles, which can make the patient more aware of their facial expression and the emotions involved in those expressions.



Risorius	Retracts the angle of the mouth outward, as in grinning
Emotions	Dissatisfaction; unhappiness, disappointment
Origin	In the fascia over the masseter muscle
Insertion	Into the skin at the corner of the mouth
Needling	30 mm; 38 (#2 Japanese) or 36 gauge (#3 Japanese), 0.3-0.5 cun

**Psychospiritual Treatments:**

After seeing a patient 2 to 5 times during the course of a Constitutional Facial Acupuncture treatment series, certain emotions may arise that need to be addressed at the constitutional level. When this transpires, I use a treatment with psychospiritual points coupled with specific essential oils to address the Shen imbalances.

This approach allows for, and facilitates, a natural transformative process within the patient, one which is accentuated and accelerated by the very nature of the facial treatments.

**Three Shen Points with Essential Oils**

The Three Shen Points located in the scalp are especially effective in transforming Spirit. Their names all contain the word ‘Shen’, and they are used to treat psychospiritual issues, ranging from anxiety to manic depression.

I customarily apply these essential oils to the points after needling to augment the potency and efficacy of the treatment, although this is optional. Use 3-4 drops on a Q-tip (cotton bud) to ensure that the tip is wet before applying. Some essential oils can be applied “neat”, while others are too strong, and must be grounded in a carrier oil.

One of the Shen points, GB-13 Benshen, is located 0.5 cun within the hairline of the forehead, 3 cun lateral to Du-24 Shenting.

TCM Indications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calms spirit; schizophrenia, jealousy and suspicion;</li> <li>Expels wind; windstroke, epilepsy, Bell’s palsy</li> <li>Clears the brain and gathers essence back to the head;</li> <li>Treats headache, insomnia, epilepsy, stroke, convulsions, split personality, jealousy, lack of will power, confusion;</li> <li>Calms mood swings, psychic attacks, eases tension</li> </ul>
Psychospiritual indications and qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gall Bladder point; aids in courage and decision making;</li> <li>Roots mind/body connection and balances emotions in the organ systems;</li> <li>Balances extremes of emotion;</li> <li>Represents the emotional response to one’s worldly challenges;</li> <li>Supports, grounds and balances life processes</li> </ul>

**Suggested Essential Oil Pairing:** Ai Wei (Ferula galbaniflua); galbanum

Galbanum smooths Liver Qi flow, Liver overacting on Spleen, expels damp phlegm and wind damp, as well as mucus in the lungs. It is also a cellular regenerator.

Properties	Nervine, expectorant, analgesic, antispasmodic, carminative, emmenagogue, resolvent, vulnerary, stimulant
Contraindications	Galbanum is an emmenagogue, which encourages menstruation, hence it is contraindicated for pregnancy
Psychospiritual	Galbanum balances bodymind and spirit, eases tension and is used to address erratic mood swings, as well as psychic blockages. It facilitates meditation and was used by the ancient Egyptians in embalming, because of its preservative properties.

In my experience, spirit points are essential and not optional to the success of a Constitutional Facial Acupuncture treatment series.

A step-by-step facial protocol integrating topical herbal masks, poultices, creams, natural cleansers and essential oils will enhance your results threefold. Cleansing and hydrating the face is paramount for effective treatments, and the addition of the jade rollers, hydrosols and tuning forks makes this approach more effective.



## CONCLUSION

### A Few Insights

Facial acupuncture seemingly targets only the visible signs of aging, and consequently is often labeled as cosmetic by the general public and many of my fellow acupuncturists.

However, without a strong constitutional component, this modality effects neither long-term change in the patient's general health, nor does it ameliorate any significant dermatological issues. The face is the most emotive part of the anatomy. These attributes make the face a perfect indicator of physical and psychoemotional imbalances.

The patient/practitioner dynamic is a relationship that depends

upon respect and clear communication. Honor your patient's wishes, but remain true to yourself, anchored in your integrity, wisdom and good judgment.

My philosophy of facial acupuncture focuses on the idea of renewal. The patient who embarks upon a Constitutional Facial Acupuncture treatment series has made a commitment to a profound transformational journey.

## REFERENCE

1. Low, Royston (1984) *The Secondary Vessels of Acupuncture: A Detailed Account of their Energies, Meridians and Control Points*, Harper Collins, New York, NY, (out of print).