

Acupressure Technique to Control Gag Reflex

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Abstract

A pronounced gag reflex can be a severe limitation to a patient's ability to accept dental care and for a clinician's ability to provide it. It can compromise all aspects of dentistry from diagnostic procedures to active treatment and can be distressing for all concerned. Acupressure can be used as a method to control gag reflex.

Key words gag reflex, acupressure.

Introduction

Gag reflex is a normal, healthy defense mechanism. It functions to prevent foreign bodies from entering the trachea. Gagging movements alter the shape of the pharynx and its various openings to eject foreign bodies from the mouth and pharynx. Some have a reduced reflex, while others have a pronounced one. Pronounced gag reflexes can compromise all aspects of dentistry, from the diagnostic procedures of examination and radiography to any form of active treatment. In some patients with marked gagging reflexes can lead to

avoidance of treatment. Making a maxillary arch impression with a pronounced gag reflex can be challenging. One simple and easy way of managing such a patient is by using acupressure to control the gag reflex.

Three acupressure points have been identified for controlling gag reflex.

Chengjiang (REN 24) : It is situated in the horizontal mentolabial groove, approximately midway between the chin and the lower lip.

Hegu : Concave area between first and second metacarpal bones.

Neiguan : Concave area at medial aspect by medial forearm (Neiguan cave) on palm horizontal veins of center, which is up to 2.5 cun (one cun is equal to one third decimeter, approximately one horizontal finger width).

Procedure

Apply light finger pressure. Progressively increase the finger pressure until the patient feels soreness and distension. The procedure should start at least 5 minutes before impression making, continue

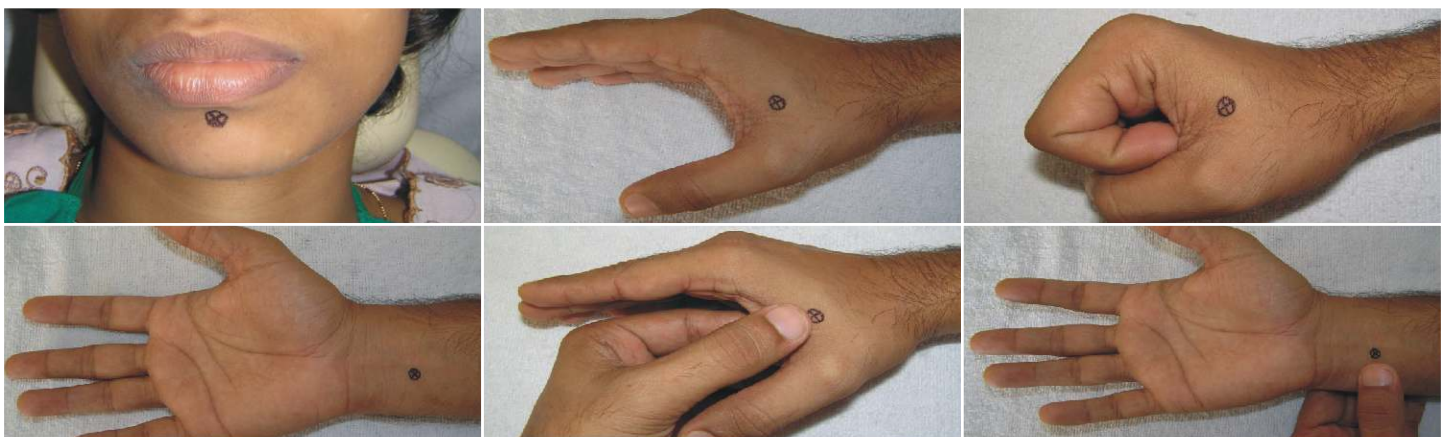
through the impression procedure and terminated only after the impression has been removed from the patient's mouth. Pressure can be applied by the patient, dental assistant or the dentist.

Conclusion

The technique of acupressure is simple, non invasive and effective. It causes little discomfort, is cheap and requires little additional clinical time. The patient does not require an escort and can return to normal daily activities after treatment.

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