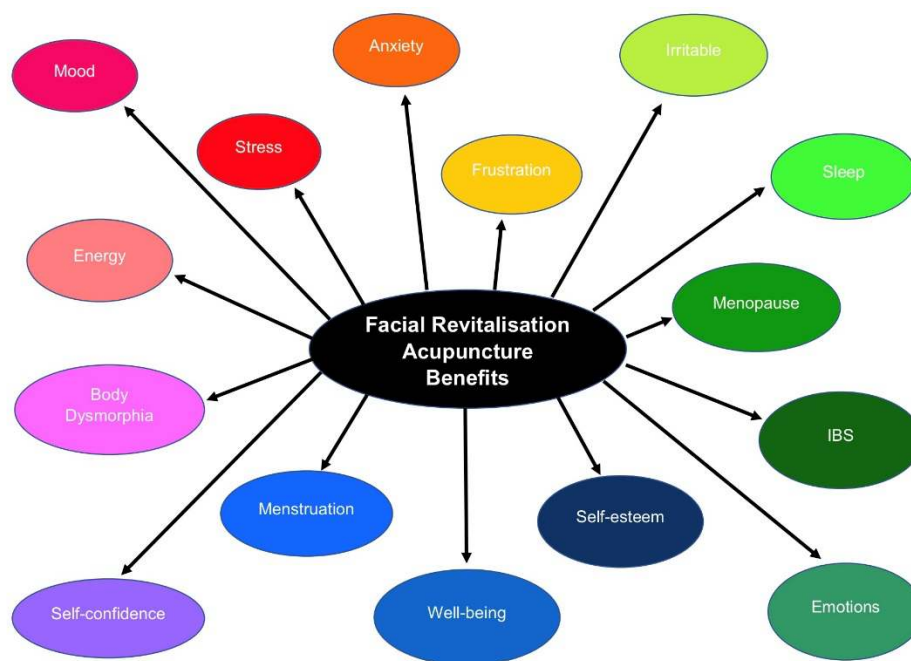


As perceived by the practitioner, what are the wider health benefits to be gained from having a full course of facial revitalisation acupuncture treatment, other than facial enhancement ones?

A Survey and Analysis



Research and Reflective Practice - Level 6 AC6906

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Contents

	Page
List of Charts and Tables.....	4
List of Appendices.....	5
Abstract.....	6
Key words.....	7
Conclusion of Literature Review.....	7
Research Question.....	7
Introduction.....	8
Method of Research.....	11
Results Table.....	17
Results Analysis.....	18
Discussion.....	36
Conclusion.....	46
Future Research.....	37
References.....	48
Appendices.....	53
Bibliography.....	59

List of Charts and Tables

	Page
Fig.1 Table of survey dispatches and responses received.....	17
Fig.2 Question 1- Results: To what extent, where applicable, do you agree that patients have improved anxiety and stress levels?.....	18
Fig.3 Question 2- Results: To what extent do you agree that patients have improved general mood?.....	20
Fig.4 Question 3- Results: To what extent do you agree that patients have improved frustration and/or irritability levels?.....	21
Fig.5 Question 4- Results: To what extent, where applicable, do you agree that patients have an improvement on a pre-existing illness or disease?...	22
Fig.6 Question 5- Results: To what extent do you agree that patients have an improvement in sleep?.....	24
Fig.7 Question 6- Results: To what extent do you agree that female patients have an improvement in their menstruation or menopause symptoms?.....	25
Fig.8 Question 7- Results: To what extent do you agree that patients have an improvement in any other health issue?.....	27
Fig.9 Question 8- Results: In your opinion do you think that FRA has the ability to maintain health and/or well-being, whilst preventing illness or disease?..	29
Fig.10 Question 9- Results: To what extent do you agree that patients have an overall improvement in their pulses?.....	30

List of Appendices

	Page
Appendix 1: Research Ethics Application Form.....	52
Appendix 2: Receipt of donation made to Anxiety UK.....	57
Appendix 3: Full list of Amitriptyline side effects.....	58

Abstract

Objectives: The aim of this paper was to explore and identify the wider benefits of facial revitalisation acupuncture (FRA), aside from facial enhancement ones. Can FRA deliver a more holistic and safer alternative to non-surgical treatments? And if so, what adjunct benefits can be gained from having a full course of FRA. Three key aspects will be explored in this paper in order to determine these wider benefits, they are; emotions, health and the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) perspective.

Methods: A qualitative study design survey was chosen, as it would be the most effective and thorough account of practitioner's experience. A short questionnaire was emailed to 115 practitioners, 39 responded. 10 questions were designed around 3 specific topics areas of FRA; Emotions, Health and TCM. The aim being, to produce a fully comprehensive and thorough account of the benefits of FRA from the practitioner's perspective, aside from facial enhancement ones. Practitioners were able to select the degree to which they agreed or disagreed and were given the opportunity to elaborate on it if they wished.

Results: Study results found that FRA treatment would most likely improve all three aspects explored, however the emotional well-being of individuals was the most probable. The study found that many signs and symptoms could be addressed by using FRA as an adjunct holistic therapy.

Conclusions: This study concludes that a full course of FRA treatment may incur many positive benefits, aside from facial enhancement ones. These range from an improvement in irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), to low self-esteem.

Key Words: Benefits, Adjunct, Facial Revitalisation Acupuncture (FRA), Emotions, Health and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

Conclusion of Literature Review: The literature review concluded that while there were many studies on the effectiveness of FRA, there were limited resources available with regards to the holistic benefits of FRA, as well as facial enhancement benefits. Most studies conducted concerned the difference in skin quality and little to no information on the wider benefits of FRA, such as an improved general well-being.

Research Question: As perceived by the practitioner, what are the wider health benefits to be gained from having a full course of facial revitalisation acupuncture treatment, other than facial enhancement ones?

Introduction:

A recent audit published by The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS) found that over 28,000 surgical procedures took place in 2018. One of the three most popular surgical procedures included a blepharoplasty (eyelid surgery), while facelifts rose by 7%, accounting for 2,134 subjects (1). This is a rise from 2,002 subjects in 2017 (22).

Meanwhile, non-surgical treatments are proving to be increasingly popular.

Botulinum Toxin (BOTOX) and Dermal fillers contributed towards 9 out of 10 non-surgical procedures, making the industry worth a staggering £2.75 billion in the UK (2). This goes to show the popularity of facial reconstruction procedures. However, there is a lot to be considered with regards to the safety of non-surgical treatments.

One of the many major risk factors is the lack of certainty in who is licensed to undertake such procedures. Currently non-surgical procedures such as BOTOX and dermal fillers may be legally carried out by anyone, irrespective of training or experience. Therefore, the industry is currently inadequately regulated and largely unaccountable, instead many people are sold by the promises of great results, at an incredibly low cost (3).

A further considerable risk factor are the products that are used when undergoing a non-surgical procedure. For example; though Licenced brands of Botulinum Toxin A is a prescription only medicine, there is a growing market for cheap unlicensed brands, which are now becoming more widely available via the internet and the implications can be dire (3).

So, what about FRA as an alternative to other non-surgical procedures and what are the risk factors? Firstly, The British Acupuncture Council (BAcC) state the importance of going to an acupuncturist that is properly trained and insured, and who belongs to a recognised professional organisation with clear codes of safe practice and professional conduct. The BAcC themselves state that “we are unaware of any reported adverse events through our professional insurers or through our own internal mechanism for collecting data on safety” (4).

Having carried out research for the purpose of this dissertation, it would appear that most acupuncture practitioners who offer FRA as an alternative treatment, are members of the BAcC and this will be discussed in further detail later. Moreover, other than a few contraindications such as high blood pressure or diabetes and the low risk of bruising and hematomas, there are virtually no risks or adverse side effects of FRA (5). Collectively, these reasons are a great opportunity to explore the natural anti-aging protocol, which may radically change the future of non-surgical procedures.

When undertaking the literature review, a largely systematic search of the literature across multiple databases was adhered to. Following critically analysing these resources, virtually no evidence was found for the wider health benefits of FRA, aside from facial enhancements ones. For example, most studies conducted concerned the difference in skin quality, such as muscle tone and collagen production, following a course of FRA. There was otherwise little to no mention of the wider benefits.

Moreover, it became apparent that there were three main reoccurring aspects of FRA that were applicable in order to establish what the additional benefits of FRA are. They are;

- Emotions, such as improved well-being and self-esteem.
- Health related benefits for example; Bell's palsy and sleep.
- Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) aspects, like how FRA affects the pulses and emotions.

In order to gain full comprehensive, robust and unprecedented research, it was concluded that the research would be dedicated to exploring the accounts of experienced and licensed acupuncture practitioners who practice FRA as part of their practice. Which in turn should create exceptional quality statistical evidence and give FRA the credit as a non-surgical treatment that it deserves.

Method

It was concluded that the most effective and thorough method design would be a survey, completed by only qualified and fully licensed acupuncturists. Upon designing 10 survey questions, it was decided that in order to successfully answer the main research question, the questions would be based on the three main reoccurring aspects of FRA that were previously mentioned; emotions, health related benefits and TCM. As such three questions were dedicated to the emotions. Four questions were based around health benefits and two questions were devoted to the TCM aspect. The final question was an open question, where practitioners could comment on any wider benefit of FRA that may not have been previously covered.

The proposed study design has largely remained the same however, changes were made to the design of the study.

Initially, the researcher had proposed that the optional answers would be percentages and as such the options would have been;

- 0-20%
- 21-40%
- 41-60%
- 61-80%
- 81-100%

However, after consideration, it was concluded that answers would be better and more accurately answered verbally and this was changed to;

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

It was concluded that this method was more appropriate for this study as it would be more manageable to quantify the results. It was felt that while percentages are more accurate, it was unlikely to be answered accurately, due to the lack of statistics and data that individual practitioners would themselves collect. Therefore, it was felt that in this case verbal answers would be more appropriate and easier for practitioners to answer, rather than on a numerical or percentage scale.

After these changes were made, the survey was piloted and it was sent to five students studying at The College of Integrated Chinese Medicine (CICM), all of whom have an interest in FRA.

Following piloting, the feedback received from students included; participants were able to tick more than one answer, for example; agree and disagree. This would obviously be detrimental to the results and this was therefore soon rectified, and respondents were only able to tick one answer.

It was suggested by two participants to have an additional comments box per question, to give respondents the opportunity to elaborate if they wish to. This was considered in great depth and it was eventually concluded that questions one to nine would include a comments box, as question ten is for comment answers only.

It was felt that by including a comments box, respondents would be able to rationalise and specify why they answered like they did, furthermore this could potentially back up statistics. The comment boxes were made optional and respondents did not have to justify or support their answer in order to complete the survey. Lastly, it was necessary that for respondents to 'complete' the survey, every question must be answered.

The research design is a quantitative survey, powered by SurveyMonkey. This seemed the most appropriate design and method. It meant that it could reach an array of practitioners, both locally and afar. It is also one of the world's most widely used survey development cloud-based software companies and therefore a high volume of people are familiar with this method.

All practitioners were individually and carefully vetted, this will be explained in more depth later. They were then contacted personally by email which included a link to the survey. In order to gain as many responses as possible, the researcher pledged to donate 50p per response to Anxiety UK, who are working in collaboration with the BAAC in order to determine the effectiveness of acupuncture treatment, for those suffering with anxiety, stress and depression. This offer has been upheld, and the donation receipt can be seen in appendix 2.

The first email to practitioners generated 25 responses. Following a two-week interim period, a further email was sent politely reminding practitioners to complete the survey, if they had already not done so. Within the second email, included a survey closing date (09/03/2020), this was done to encourage practitioners to complete the survey as soon as possible. Following the second email, responses increased to 39 and it was decided that it was now appropriate to close the survey. In total, 115

practitioners were contacted, the total number of respondents was 39, therefore the response rate was 44.85%.

It should be mentioned that due to SurveyMonkey being completely confidential, all practitioners were contacted twice, including those who had already responded. However, respondents were only able to complete the survey once, therefore this allowed for no manipulation or any mishandling to be breached.

In order to keep this survey as qualitative as possible, each practitioner was investigated by virtue of their website prior to contacting them. This included researching if they carried out FRA, on a regular basis, as part of their clinic and indeed if they were qualified to do so. Great consideration was given to exploring the perspectives of acupuncturists on a global level. Research was carried out regarding the licensing protocol of acupuncturist's in the USA, to ensure that applicants were at the same high level as those that had already been invited to complete the survey in the UK. However, this proved to be an extensive sample population for this study.

Moreover, while TCM and Five Element Acupuncturists were who this study was aimed at, and these are the two primary styles of acupuncture practiced in the USA, it would appear, that there is no such register for acupuncturist's that are qualified to practice FRA. Instead, education is undertaken by private teachers, each teacher then compiles their own database of practitioners. Due to these two fundamental issues, this was decided against and instead the study compromised only of UK acupuncturists, except for a very small number of senior American acupuncturists.

As per the proposed literature review, the sample population was aimed at degree level, qualified acupuncturists only. Therefore, all potential participants were carefully researched, and detailed records were stored. This included; where they had

undertaken their acupuncture degree. Records were and remain confidential. This was all in line with the British Educational Research Association ethical guidelines (6). Moreover, as per CICM requirements an ethics form can be found in appendix 1.

In turn, it can be guaranteed that this survey is a comprehensive and qualitative study, completed only by those who have a high level of knowledge and experience of FRA and acupuncture. Therefore, they were able to answer the survey with a high level of insight into the wider benefits of FRA, beyond facial enhancement.

One valuable data collection method used was via the Cosmetic Acupuncture UK register, founded by Paul Adkins, which enlists all FRA practitioners that Paul has himself tutored. Every practitioner was rigorously researched, this therefore included ensuring that each practitioner met the above criteria. Practitioners were otherwise established by Googling 'acupuncturists' and then researching who had a special interest in FRA, region by region, before again ensuring that they also met the same criteria.

The sample population was largely made up of CICM graduates and practitioners who had studied at The International College of Oriental Medicine (ICOM). Of the 115 practitioners emailed, 44.85% were CICM graduates and 28.75% graduated from ICOM. The remaining applicants (26.4%) were otherwise a combination of graduates from London Southbank University, Northern College of Acupuncture, London College of Traditional Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, The University of Westminster and The Acupuncture Academy. The study also included a few practitioners of whom are TCM doctors, who practice in the UK. Additionally, only a

handful of practitioners were contacted outside of the UK and this was some of the most highly regarded licenced acupuncturists known in the USA.

Lastly, although it was not a mandatory requirement, their BAAC registration status was recorded and stored securely. Out of the total number of practitioners contacted, 93.15% were BAAC registered, this therefore validates the quality of this study.

Results Table

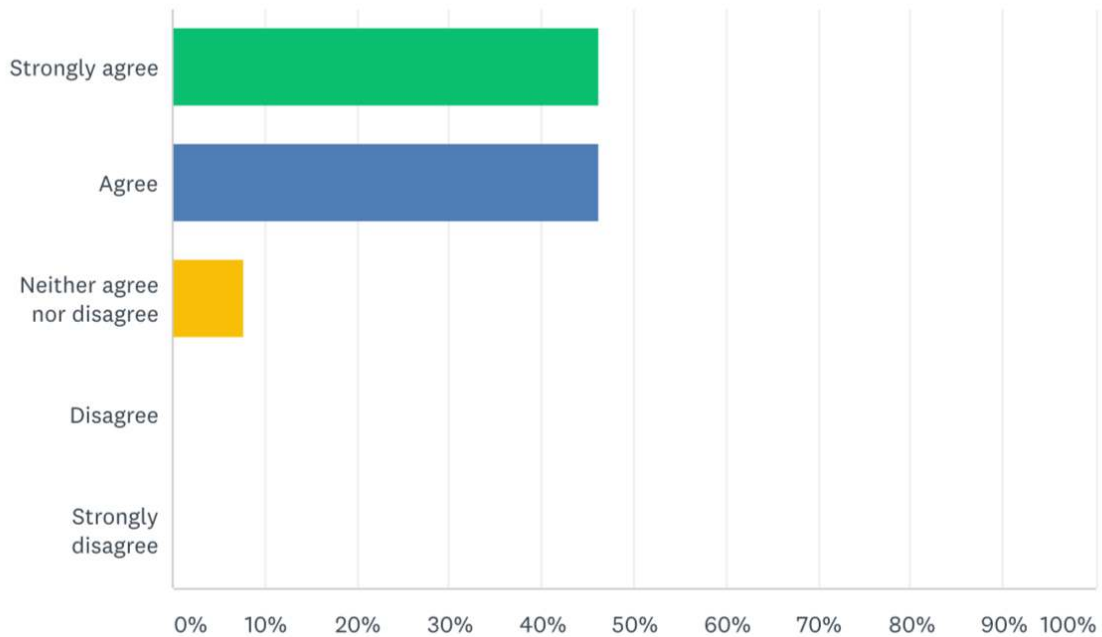
Fig.1: Table of survey dispatches and responses received

Dispatch Number	Date	Sample	Total Invitations Sent	Total Responses Received
1st initial email invitation	14/02/2020 First invitation to complete survey	Degree and licenced Acupuncturists	115	25
2nd email invitation	27/02/2020 Reminder email	Degree and licenced Acupuncturists	115	14
Total			115	39

Results Analysis

Fig.2 Question 1:

To what extent, where applicable, do you agree that patients have improved anxiety and stress levels?



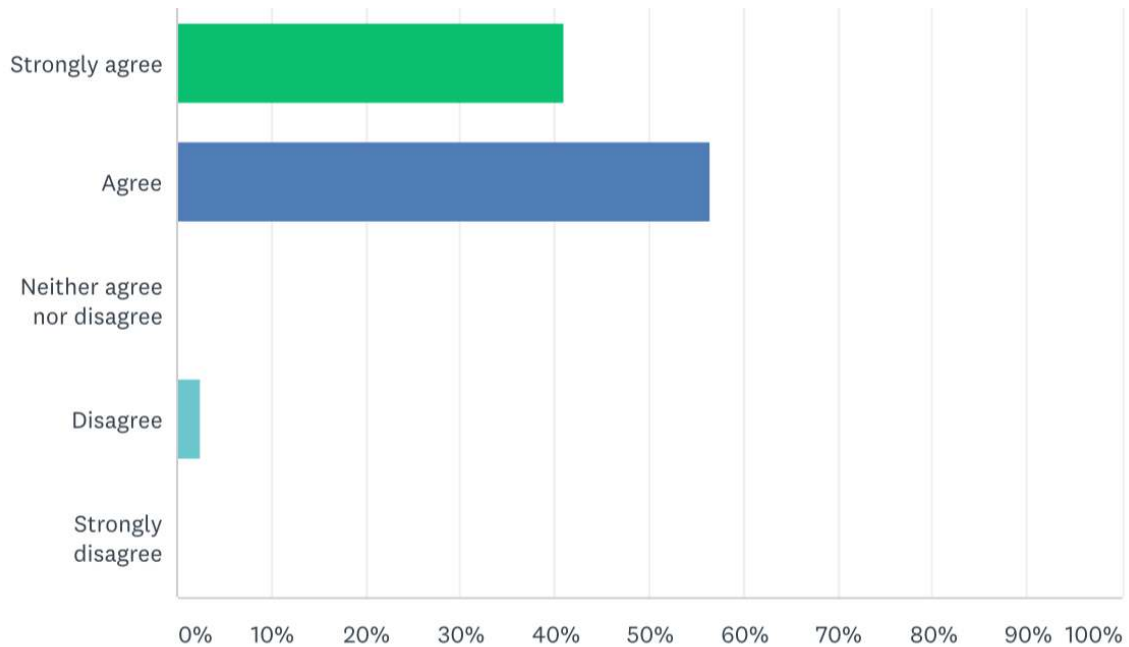
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	46.15% 18
Agree	46.15% 18
Neither agree nor disagree	7.69% 3
Disagree	0.00% 0
Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
TOTAL	39

36 practitioners either strongly agreed or agreed that their patients had improved anxiety and stress levels following FRA treatment. This would indicate that a large proportion of practitioners (92.3%) felt that FRA had a positive influence on patients' anxiety and stress levels. Two practitioners mentioned that they would use body

points in combination with FRA in order to alleviate patients stress and anxiety levels.

Fig.3 Question 2:

To what extent do you agree that patients have improved general mood?

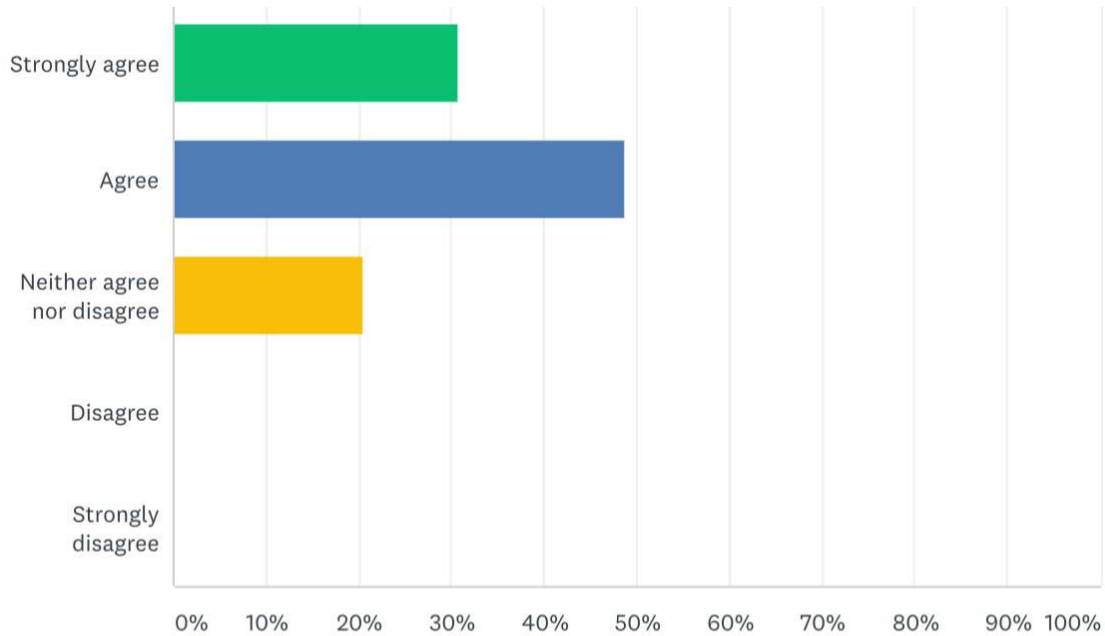


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	41.03% 16
Agree	56.41% 22
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00% 0
Disagree	2.56% 1
Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
TOTAL	39

The largest proportion of practitioners either strongly agreed or agreed that in their experience FRA was exceedingly beneficial for lifting a patient’s mood. Only one practitioner disagreed otherwise. The general comments made by practitioners were that they generally felt that on the whole FRA helped benefit their patient’s mood. One practitioner stated, “Often if they arrive at their appointments quite stressed, they leave very rested and relaxed”.

Fig.4 Question 3:

To what extent do you agree that patients have improved frustration and/or irritability levels?

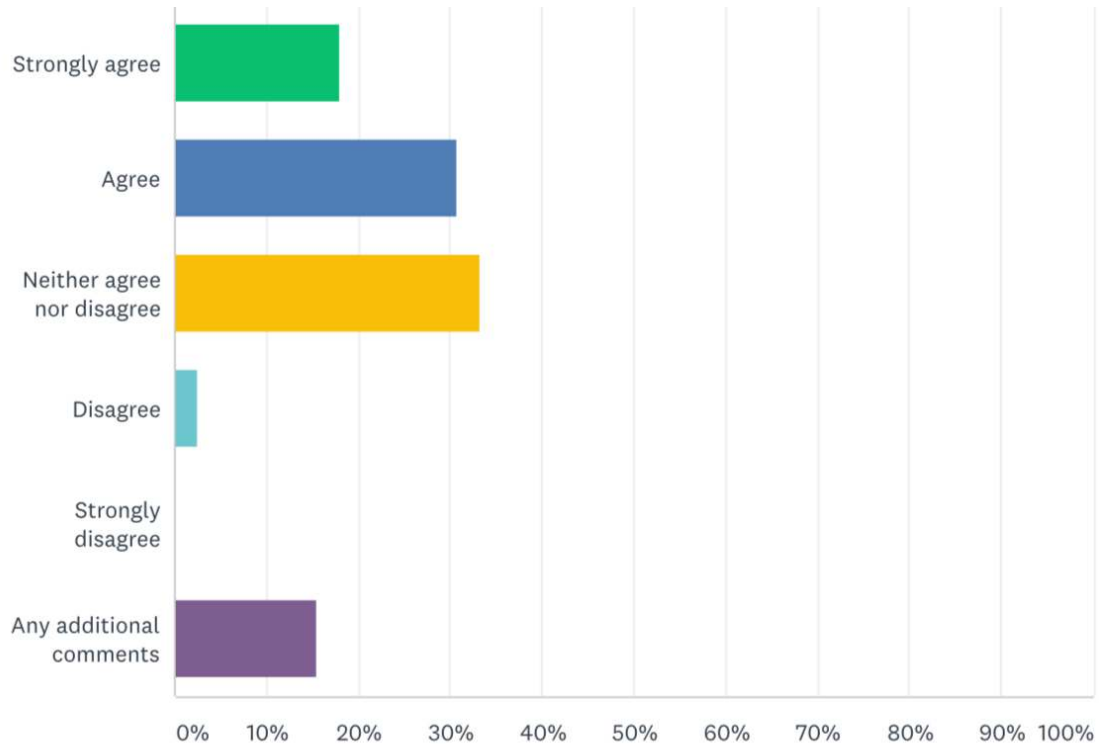


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	30.77% 12
Agree	48.72% 19
Neither agree nor disagree	20.51% 8
Disagree	0.00% 0
Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
TOTAL	39

Nearly, 50% of practitioners agreed that a course of FRA benefited patient’s frustration and irritability levels, while 30.77% strongly agreed. No practitioners disagreed. One practitioner mentioned that “a number of patients have commented how they feel able to cope with stressful situations much better whilst having a course of FRA”.

Fig.5 Question 4:

To what extent, where applicable, do you agree that patients have an improvement on a pre-existing illness or disease?



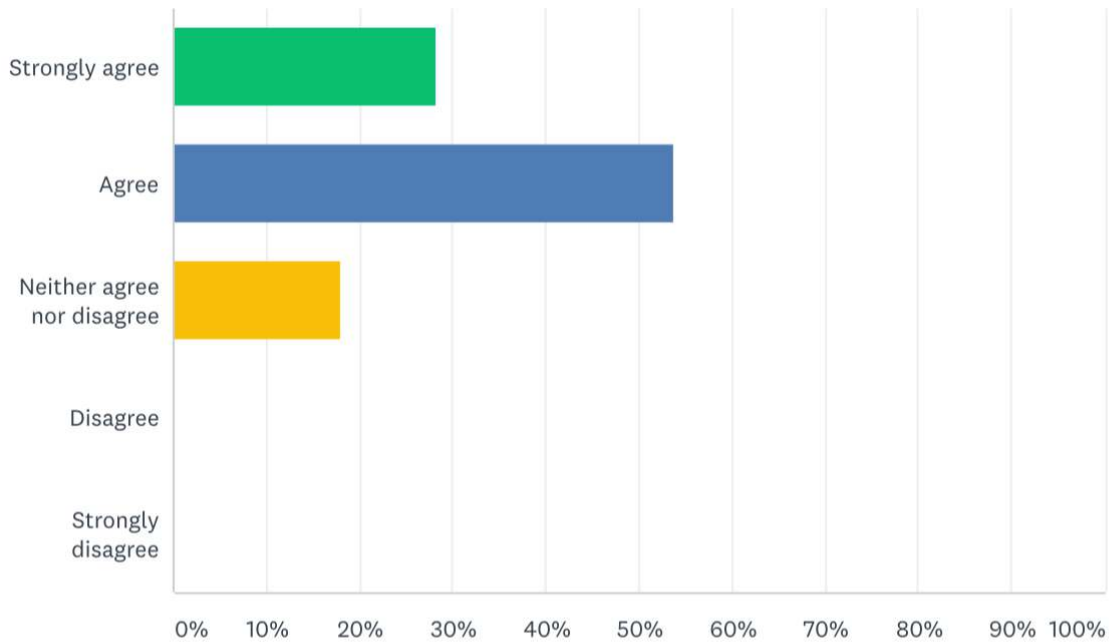
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	17.95% 7
Agree	30.77% 12
Neither agree nor disagree	33.33% 13
Disagree	2.56% 1
Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
TOTAL	39

It would appear that practitioners felt that FRA had a less profound effect on a pre-existing illness or disease. However, 30.77% still agreed that in their experience patients show an improvement on a pre-existing illness or disease following a course of FRA treatment. One practitioner stated that “a number of patients have told me

that their IBS symptoms has greatly improved whilst having FRA”. Two practitioners felt that progress largely ‘depends’ on the circumstances of the patient.

Fig.6 Question 5:

To what extent do you agree that patients have an improvement in sleep?

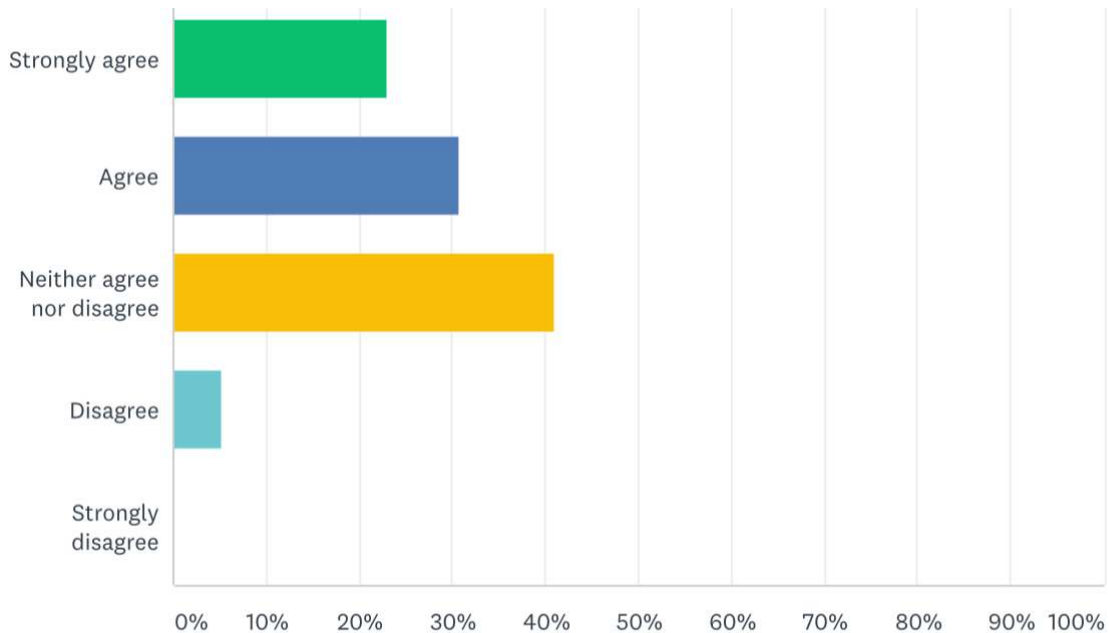


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	28.21% 11
Agree	53.85% 21
Neither agree nor disagree	17.95% 7
Disagree	0.00% 0
Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
TOTAL	39

Following a course of FRA treatment over half of practitioners (53.85%) agreed that patients showed an improvement in their sleep. Otherwise, 28.21% strongly agreed with this and no one disagreed. One practitioner stated that an improvement in sleep is “where I receive the most positive feedback”.

Fig.7 Question 6:

To what extent do you agree that female patients have an improvement in their menstruation or menopause symptoms?



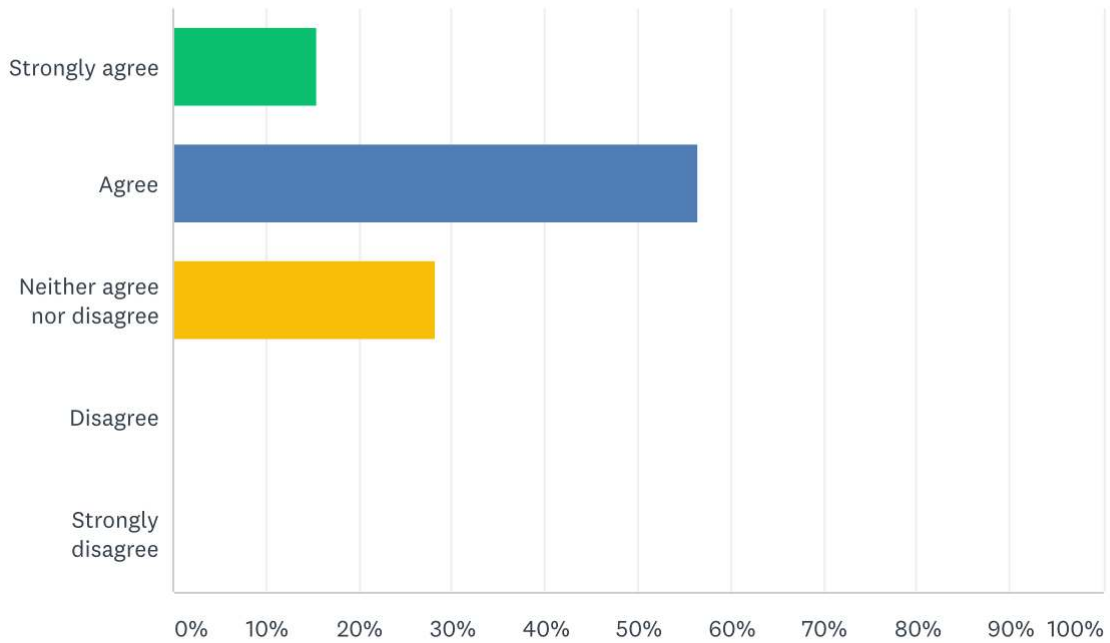
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	23.08% 9
Agree	30.77% 12
Neither agree nor disagree	41.03% 16
Disagree	5.13% 2
Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
TOTAL	39

It would appear that practitioners felt that a course of FRA treatment had less of an impact on menstruation or menopause symptoms. 23.08% still strongly agreed and 30.77% agreed that FRA improved symptoms, however, 41.03% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Two practitioners mentioned the importance of using body points to address menopause or menstrual symptoms. However, two practitioners who had treated mostly peri-menopausal and post-menopausal women, reported the positive effects that FRA had had. One practitioner specified that “the signs and symptoms are much improved when undergoing FRA”, while another reported that “it has been great for menopausal symptoms”.

Fig.8 Question 7:

To what extent do you agree that patients have an improvement in any other health issue?



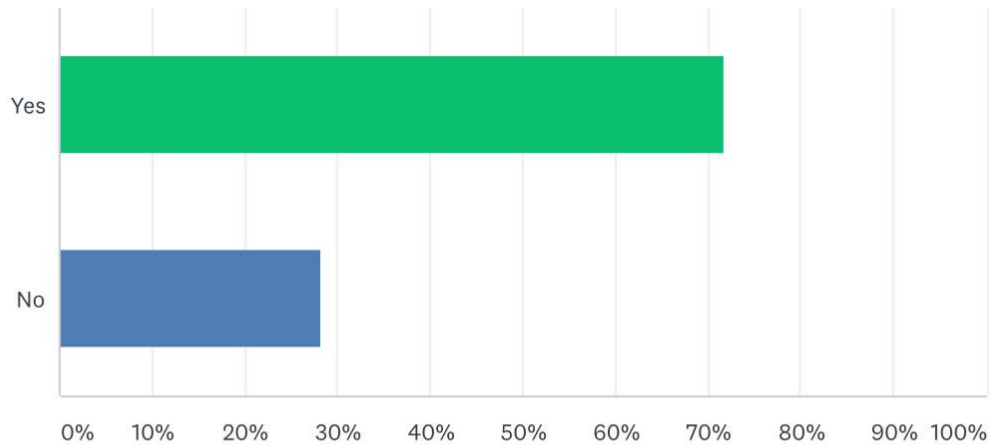
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	15.38% 6
Agree	56.41% 22
Neither agree nor disagree	28.21% 11
Disagree	0.00% 0
Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
TOTAL	39

The largest majority of practitioners (56.41%) agreed that FRA had an improvement in another health issue. 15.38% of practitioners also strongly agreed with this statement. No one disagreed. In the comments section here, no practitioners stated a health issue in particular that had improved. However, one practitioner mentioned

that “99% of their patients report a general overall feeling of good health after 3-4 continued weekly sessions of FRA”.

Fig.9 Question 8:

In your opinion do you think that FRA has the ability to maintain health and/or well-being, whilst preventing illness or disease?

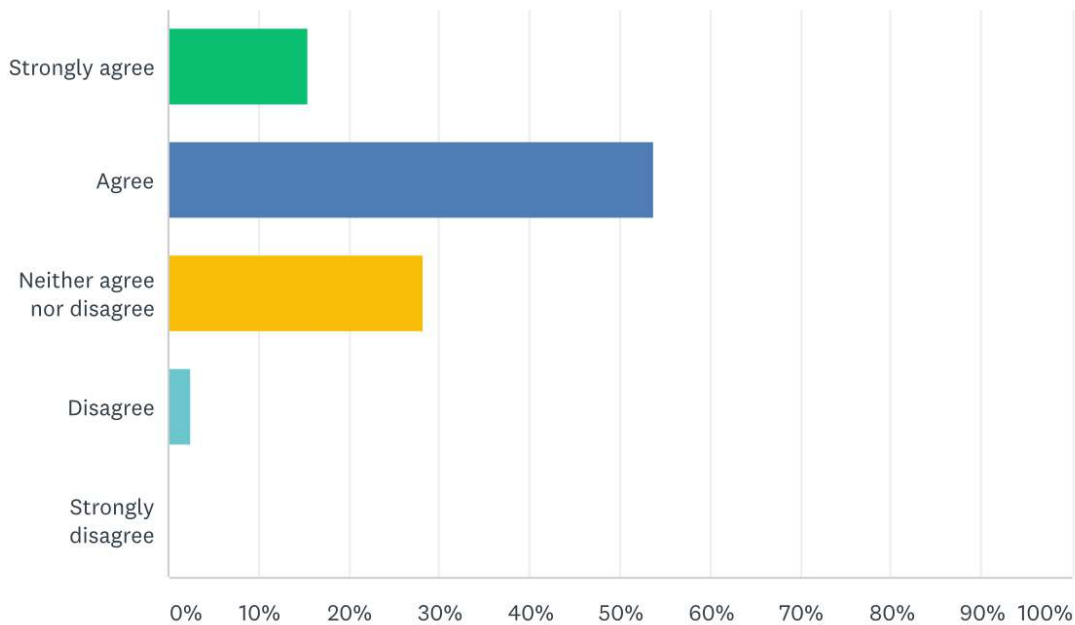


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Yes	71.79% 28
▼ No	28.21% 11
TOTAL	39

The largest majority of practitioners (71.79%) felt that FRA does have the ability to maintain health and/or well-being, whilst preventing illness or disease. Again, a number of practitioners mentioned the importance of using additional body points in order to achieve this. While two others felt that treatment would have to be more specific in order to address this. However, one practitioner stated that in their experience “it can have an impact on self-esteem, stress and energy levels”. While another reported “I’ve had too many positive feedback comments from a varied background of patients to dismiss this probability!” Additionally, a further practitioner said that “lots of symptoms improve after treatment”.

Fig 10 Question 9:

To what extent do you agree that patients have an overall improvement in their pulses?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	15.38% 6
Agree	53.85% 21
Neither agree nor disagree	28.21% 11
Disagree	2.56% 1
Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
TOTAL	39

Over half of practitioners (53.85%), found that patients pulses had improved following treatment and 15.38% strongly agreed. Only one practitioner disagreed (2.56%). One practitioner made an interesting observation stating that “I have retaken the pulses of about 50% of my FRA patients and almost all of their Heart and Liver pulses had changed – Less pound and a more steadied rhythm”.

Question 10:

Are there any other benefits that you have noticed in patients other than those mentioned?

In total 18 responses were disclosed to this optional question, which was open to comments of no more than 100 words. This study was carried out in order to ascertain if there were, and if so what, are the wider benefits of FRA, beyond facial enhancement ones, from a practitioner's perspective.

Some comments reinforced the efficacy of FRA from a facial enhancement perspective, instead of mentioning the wider benefits such as; "There is improvement in skin health and texture. Cosmetic acupuncture is also very good at diminishing wrinkles and facial scarring". Or likewise; "instant improvement to blood flow to the face of the patient alongside slightly raised and more taut cheeks". Otherwise, many comments were very enlightening concerning the wider benefits of FRA treatment.

In order to maintain clarity and conform to the same format that was proposed concerning the distinct areas that the questions were based around, comments will be summarised and divided into these same subsections; emotions, health and TCM. Moreover, if no comments comfortably fit into these subsections, they will be categorised under the section 'miscellaneous'.

Emotions:

- “I have seen women and men gain confidence, and over time facial acupuncture help with other mediums make decisions to enhance their lives”.
- “Depends how you treat them of course- the protocol used and the thoroughness and knowledge and skill of practitioner. Increased self-esteem and body dysmorphia. Many dermatological problems clear up”.
- “Clarity of mind. Relaxation. Improved immune response. Enhance capacity to cope with life and death. Emotional release. Reduced PTSD reactions. Improved capacity to respond to life rather than react. Greater ability to deal with stress”.
- “Increased self-confidence”.
- “Just feeling like they’re doing something for themselves visually makes them happy in one context, while the treatment hugely reduces stress levels, anxiety and works on other constitutional imbalances”.
- “As the face exhibits the manifestation of any internal disharmonies using full FRA benefits both mind and body. Overall well-being is improved, and the person also feels better about themselves, so their self-confidence also improves”.

Health:

- “Apart from much improved stress and sleep, this shows (with evidence behind it) an enhancement in skin healing which is an essential aspect of facial acupuncture treatments”.
- “Overall FRA is anti-aging, rejuvenating, relaxing and healing. The results are immediate, and the patients feel lighter, calmer, balanced and have a better quality of life and have less ailments in their body. This is part of holistic and natural medicine”.
- “My patients report a sense of general well-being after FRA. I think it’s worth noting the importance of correct training as too many needles in the face without appropriate body points can cause a multitude of unpleasant symptoms such as migraine, congestion and stagnation”.
- “Digestive issues and menopausal issues respond well in tandem with FRA”.
- “Improved energy levels”.

TCM:

- “In my experience the Lou Mai in the face are able to release trapped emotion and the patient’s complexion improves from the Qi able to flow and the face feels better and lighter”.
- “I’m not sure this survey applies to how I work. I usually combine FRA with a TCM diagnosis. To what extent I use body points depends on the TCM diagnosis sometimes I alternate FRA and TCM sometimes I combine. On the rare occasion when someone just wants their lines and wrinkles addressed. Then other health questioning doesn’t come into it. Though I will question if the CF is out of balance”.

Miscellaneous:

- “In my observation, as people’s faces change during a course of FRA, the patterns that were held in the facial tissue can be resolved to some extent; not that events recorded in the face never happened, but the charge behind them lessens or disappears”.
- “There is improvement in skin health and texture. Cosmetic acupuncture is also very good at diminishing wrinkles and facial scarring”.
- “FRA is often a really good introduction to acupuncture for people who may not otherwise consider it”.
- “Instant improvement to blood flow to the face of the patient alongside slightly raised and more taut cheeks”.
- “I think the benefits come if you are delivering a holistic treatment. If so, you are deliberately aiming to help e.g. the CF. If just say 10 points on the face, no ears, probably relaxing which can bring side effects”.

Discussion

Since this study comprised of 39 Acupuncturists, working in the UK, with the exception of a few American senior acupuncturists, the interpretation of the results needs to be taken into context, thus, such a small population is not reliable, nor fully representative of the whole profession. However, due to the careful and concise research that was undertaken of practitioners, as previously explained, it can be certain that applicants of whom did complete the survey, have a significant level of knowledge in this topic area. Records were comprehensively and accurately stored, this study therefore constitutes only of qualitative research.

While the study aimed to be random, there were limitations. For example; of the 115 emailed, only 18 (20.7%) were male practitioners. Whereas, the total percentage of male acupuncturists of whom are registered with the BAaC is 'more like 30%' (Jon Farrow, BAaC Membership Department).

While exact figures are difficult to trace, as a rough guide according to Paul Adkins's register of accredited FRA practitioners in the UK's capital of London, out of a total of 17 practitioners, only 3 are male (17.65%) (16).

Likewise, how many male practitioners are there within the non-surgical treatment field, within the realms of London? Save Face is a national register of accredited non-surgical cosmetic practitioners and their register is accredited by the Professional Standards Authority. According to their register, in London there are 58 registered practitioners. Of those, approximately only 15 are male (25.86%), while the remaining 43 are female (74.14%) (17). This corresponds to the low number of FRA male practitioners that were invited to complete this survey, it is also reflective of the low number of male practitioners that are listed on Paul Adkin's register. It

could therefore be argued that it would always be difficult to ascertain an equal number of sexes.

One way that this study could have arguably represented the profession and given greater insight into the wider benefits of FRA would have been to roll the survey out on a global level. While this would have produced a more quantitative study, it was felt that the quality of the study may become compromised due to time constraints.

In a future study the USA should be considered as a first in line research resource due to their high level of education in TCM, for example a Doctorate in Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine can be achieved at the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine (7). Alternatively, Maryland University of Integrative Health, offers a master's degree which studies the theoretical foundations of acupuncture and oriental medicine, alongside the Constitutional Five Element Acupuncture tradition (8).

Mary Elizabeth Wakefield is a leading American acupuncturist in FRA and one of whom has been awarded the title of 'Educator of the Year by the American Association of Oriental Medicine'. She has compiled her own referral list of practitioners, which includes an international list of certified FRA practitioners (9). The 27-page document consists of FRA practitioners anywhere from Australia to France, as well as those that are based in the USA, however, not all are qualified acupuncturists.

It would therefore require researching every practitioner from various teachers' databases, such as, Mary Elizabeth Wakefield's and Virginia Doran's (21). The same research process should be carried out, as was done for all UK practitioners, this would include managing a very heavy level of records. Furthermore, for the study to

be completely fair and randomised, this process should be carried out using a number of American acupuncturist teacher databases. This would therefore require a great deal of further investigation, but would be a fantastic research design opportunity for future research.

Discussion results

In order to critically evaluate and interpret the results of the data collected, they will be discussed in the same subsections as previously discussed; emotions, health and TCM. Due to question 10 being an open question, and therefore not corresponding to any one of these 3 divisions, this will be discussed separately.

The first 3 questions were designed around emotional well-being and whether a full course of FRA could benefit one's emotions, as well as have facial enhancement benefits. The results were almost unanimous. A large majority of practitioners had observed over the years, that delivering FRA had a preponderance effect on their patients and that they experienced adjunct emotional benefits. That is, they had received feedback or observed that their patients, of whom had undergone a full course of FRA had improved anxiety and stress levels, improved general mood and finally, improved frustration and/or irritability levels.

This category collectively ranked the highest as a percentage, out of all three categories, at 89.74%. That is, of questions 1, 2 and 3, 89.74% of practitioners either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that a full course of FRA will consequentially have a positive impact on the emotions.

These questions did sadly highlight that feeling stressed is all too often, a normalised emotion. Two practitioners stated the most positive effect that FRA had on their client's, was decreased stress levels, either because they arrive stressed or they feel more able to cope with stress in the outside world, following a course of FRA. From the perspective of emotions, it would collectively appear that FRA is a very credible therapy, which can not only combat signs of aging but improve the emotional well-being of the population that would otherwise not be living life to their full vitality.

The second area of interest of which FRA may have a positive influence on, concerns general health benefits. Due to this being a particularly expansive area, four questions were designed around and devoted to this topic. As an observation, practitioners' answers differed more greatly than previously. Nevertheless, those of whom 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that a full course of FRA would complement a pre-existing illness or disease, improve sleep, improve menstruation or menopause symptoms and finally have an adjunct benefit on any other health issue, still collectively accounted for 64.1%.

While these questions did generate a great amount of differentiation, they were also extremely enlightening, and comments left by practitioners provided very valuable information into the wider benefits of FRA. These included; an improvement in IBS symptoms, sleep, menopause and an overall feeling of good health.

While 64.1% may not seem like a significant amount, it should be considered that optional alternatives for pre-existing illnesses or diseases may include drug therapy, of which are likely to have side effects. For example, a medicinal drug for IBS includes amitriptyline, otherwise used as an antidepressant (10), and one of the

common side effects is drowsiness (11) (see appendix 3 for a full list of side effects). Other treatment options include cognitive behaviour therapy or dietary changes (10). Therefore, a course of FRA, followed by maintenance visits, seems like a healthy alternative, which can counteract both the aging process and lessen or eradicate symptoms secondary to a pre-existing illness or disease. Even if not applicable, the study suggests that patients are likely to reap additional benefits other than just facial enhancement ones. In summary, it therefore seems completely plausible that FRA gets the recognition it deserves, as a holistic and fully comprehensive therapy, which is also a more sophisticated alternative to non-surgical treatments. Moreover, it is perfectly safe, and the only side effect is possible bruising (5).

The final topic area of which the study concentrated on concerns TCM. These questions studied the benefits that FRA may have on the prevention of illnesses and diseases. It also studied the effect that FRA may have on the pulses and whether FRA has the ability, to improve them. Collectively these two questions produced unrepresented statistics, an astounding 73.5% of practitioners either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that a course of FRA would achieve superior results for patients from a TCM perspective.

The comments written by practitioners from question 8 slightly cross over into other topic areas which have been previously mentioned, however, nonetheless practitioners seem to universally agree that FRA can act as a preventative measure for illnesses and diseases which may be manifesting, while maintaining health and well-being.

A quote written in the Huangdi NeiJing Suwen, a classical Chinese Medicine text book written around 2600 BC states “The stages of antiquity did not treat those who were already sick, but those who were not sick. When a disease has already broken out and is only then treated, would that not be just as late as to wait for thirst before digging a well, or to wait to go into battle before casting weapons” (12). This quote is as relevant today as it was when it was written. It reflects the views of practitioners in this part of the study and supports their perspective in that TCM can prevent illness or disease, whilst maintaining health and well-being.

The second part of this TCM aspect concerned the extent to which FRA treatment affects the pulses. Pulse diagnosis has always been a key diagnostic tool in TCM. On palpation of the pulses, qualities will be identified, and this will indicate the pathogen and its location. In turn, by determining the excess or deficiency of the organs, progression can be measured (19).

Collectively, 69.23% of practitioners either strongly agreed or agreed that patients had an overall improvement in their pulses following a course of FRA treatment. One practitioner stated, “I have retaken the pulses of about 50% of my FRA patients and almost all of their Heart and Liver pulses had changed – less pound and a more steadied rhythm”.

Finally question 10, an open question, which gave practitioners the opportunity to elaborate on any other benefits of FRA, other than those mentioned. This was the individual practitioner’s opportunity to share observations that they had collated or to contribute their findings of which they had received from the patient’s feedback. Again, these will be discussed in the same format, under the same subsections;

emotions, health and TCM. The miscellaneous category will be discussed separately and last.

Firstly emotions, as previously discussed practitioners almost unanimously concurred that FRA has the potential to have great effects on the emotions of individuals who undergo treatment. It would therefore appear that the majority of practitioners feel that the emotions are one of the most positively influenced areas, that FRA can have an impact on, aside from facial enhancement ones.

The additional comments that practitioners volunteered of which fell into this category only support this more. A common theme that practitioners reported here was an improvement on stress levels, following FRA treatment. This is extremely relative to the nation today. In 2018, a study published found that a ground-breaking “74% of UK adults have felt so stressed at some point over the last year they felt overwhelmed or unable to cope” (13). The NHS suggests several recommendations to anyone experiencing heightened stress levels, from seeking help from the Samaritans, to using calming breathing exercises (14). These solutions are often momentary or individualised. However, in this study practitioners reported that FRA has the adjunct benefit of giving the patients a greater ability to deal with stress, as well as reduce stress levels.

A further common pattern which arose in this section concerned an improvement in self-esteem type related emotions, including self-confidence and body dysmorphia. Practitioners reported that they had observed patients making better decisions, they had an improvement in clarity of the mind and their self-confidence also improved.

One practitioner brought up the importance of knowledge, skills and protocol used. FRA protocols vary greatly. For example; Paul Adkins writes about his protocol in his book 'Facial Enhancement Acupuncture,' in which he enlists the points used, it's location, function and application (18). Similarly, Mary Elizabeth Wakefield has her own FRA protocol and offers a 'International Gold Standards Facial Acupuncture certification teaching program (20). These protocols however, have variations.

It should be noted that patients considering a course of FRA treatment, should ensure that practitioners are listed on a register such as Paul Adkins 'Cosmetic Acupuncture UK' (16) or Mary's 'Referral List Of Practitioners' to ensure that practitioners have the knowledge and experience to undertake FRA. Furthermore, patients should also ensure that practitioners belong to a regulatory body such as the BAAC.

Of all the comments submitted in question 10, 5 related to health. Facial benefits aside, the specific wider benefits of FRA treatment that practitioners reported of which relate to health include; patients have a general improvement in well-being such as, feeling lighter and calmer with improved energy levels. One practitioner reported that "digestive issues and menopausal issues respond well in tandem with FRA", while another supported this by declaring that patients "have less ailments in their body". It would therefore appear that as well as the previously discussed health related benefits of FRA, treatment can have an additional array of adjunct benefits of which relate to health. Some of which may come as a pleasant surprise to patients.

Only 2 statements submitted by practitioners fell into the category of TCM from question 10. One reported that “in their experience the Luo Mai in the face are able to release trapped emotions and the patient’s complexion improves from the Qi able to flow and the face feels better and lighter”.

The second comment made by a practitioner in this section sums up the importance of combining FRA with TCM diagnosis. They explained that they often combine FRA with TCM diagnosis, adding that it is rare that patients main and only interest is to establish their lines and wrinkles. This implies that patients choose to have FRA more regularly for the wider benefits, rather than solely for aesthetic purposes.

Finally, a total of 5 comments fell into the miscellaneous category. Practitioners largely voiced their observations on the facial enhancement benefits of FRA, however, as this study was aimed at exploring the wider benefits of FRA, aside from facial enhancement ones. Therefore, this section will focus only on those.

One practitioner made a very interesting observation which stated, “patterns that were held in the facial tissue can be resolved to some extent; not that events recorded in the face never happened, but the charge behind them lessens or disappears”. This implies that the emotions experienced are often reflective on the face over a long period of time, especially when they are repetitive facial expressions. This theory is supported in Five Element Acupuncture; “The remnants of people’s true emotional state can still be detected on the face, however, these chronic emotional patterns become etched into people’s facial lines and reflected in the chronic holding of their facial muscles” (15).

An example of this could be someone who may be chronically frustrated. After a long period of time, liver lines may begin to appear due to the withholding of an angry face (15), these are also commonly referred to as the number elevens (18). They are vertical lines on the forehead, between the eyebrows. As the practitioner's statement above implies, these patterns held in the facial tissue can lessen with treatment.

These liver lines could be addressed by using localised treatment, which would include the insertion of intradermal needles into the liver lines and this would need to be repeated (18). Alternatively, question 3 asked practitioners to 'what extent do you agree that patients have improved frustration and/or irritability levels'? As displayed in figure 4, a total of 79.49% of practitioners either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that following a course of FRA treatment, patient's frustration and/or irritability levels would be less. This study, therefore, strongly supports the view that FRA treatment can assist to balance the emotions, which in turn acts as a preventive measure to counteract lines that would otherwise appear. This also supports the view that combining FRA with TCM and Five Element Acupuncture is key to successful treatment.

Conclusion:

To conclude, this study has found that FRA treatment can have a profound effect on individuals, who are likely to experience an array of adjunct benefits following a course of treatment, other than just facial enhancement ones.

In a world where surgical and non-surgical facial treatments are becoming more popular, but which carry a great amount of risk, FRA seems like a more sophisticated alternative and one of which does not have potentially devastating consequences. Unlike surgical and non-surgical treatments which may exert pre-existing anxiety and stress symptoms for example, FRA has shown in this study to often improve these symptoms.

This study has provided evidential support that the emotional state of a person is most likely to improve following a course of FRA treatment. Though it is not exclusively limited to this. This study also supports the view that FRA can positively influence general health, including an improvement on IBS and menopause symptoms and sleep. From a TCM perspective, this study has highlighted the importance of individualised tailored treatment and the validity of combining Five Element Acupuncture, TCM and FRA. With thorough and extensive knowledge in these subjects on the practitioner's part, FRA treatment can act as a preventative measure for illnesses and diseases which may be manifesting, while maintaining health and well-being, as well as having facial revitalisation benefits.

This study has provided evidence that there are an array of wider benefits of FRA aside from facial enhancement ones and specifically identified some of these adjunct benefits. Therefore, while facial enhancement benefits may be the prime reason for

clients to seek treatment, there are further adjunct benefits of FRA of which the client may foresee.

Finally, it cannot be undermined that the importance of having FRA treatment delivered by a qualified expert is immeasurably important. Treatment delivered by an expert, who belongs to a recognised regulatory body, will give patients the security and knowing that treatment will be risk free, holistic and personalised, which will meet the needs of the individual.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Ethics Application Form

RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION FORM

Please hand in this form together with your Literature Review and Proposed Study Design by the due date.

SECTION A	Ye	No	N/ A
Please answer the following questions by ticking the appropriate box	s		
Will you inform participants of procedures in advance, using a participant information sheet, of the characteristics of the work and their expected involvement?	√		
Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary, and provide information about where to ask questions or complain?	√		
Will you obtain participant consent using a consent form, and state until what point that they can withdraw from the study?	√		
Will you tell the participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason without prejudice?	√		
Will your results be suitably de-identified so that they cannot be linked to individual study participants?	√		
Will your work not require you to take photographs or video recordings?	√		

If your data collection uses social networks, are the hosts of the social networks agreeable to this use of their sites?	√		
Is it clear that the research is undertaken by you as a student at CICM?	√		
<p>Advice must be sought from MB/RG if you have answered “<u>no</u>” to any of the questions, otherwise please continue to the following page answering Yes/No/N/A.</p>			

SECTION B Please answer the following questions by ticking the appropriate box	Ye s	No	N/A
Does the research involve persons under 18 and/or any persons with learning or communication difficulties, mentally incapacitated, vulnerable, in custody or engaged in illegal activities, or data related to them?		√	
Does the proposed research pose any reputational risks for CICM (e.g. adverse media attention due to the topic or the data collection)?		√	
Will the data be used for purposes other than that for which it was obtained?		√	
Are you in a position of authority or influence over the participants?		√	
If privileged data is being used to recruit participants, such as a through a gatekeeper, is appropriate consent being sought?			√
Is there any direct physical contact with participants?		√	
Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants in any way?		√	
Is there any realistic risk of any <u>participants</u> experiencing distress or discomfort?		√	
Is there any realistic risk to <u>student(s)</u> experiencing distress or discomfort?		√	
Does the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?		√	

If any Health and Safety implications have been identified, has a risk assessment been made?			√
Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. illegal or sexual activities, religious practices)?		√	
Does the study involve taking physiological measures?		√	
Will financial inducements, expenses or compensation be offered to participants?		√	
<p>If it has been answered “<u>yes</u>” to any questions, students can only proceed if further ethical review is obtained. Please notify MB/RG.</p> <p>If it has been answered “<u>no</u>” to all the questions, students can proceed with the study.</p>			

Appendix 2: Receipt of donation made to Anxiety UK**Receipt for your donation to Anxiety UK**

Dear Abbey Palmer,



You donated £20.00 GBP to
Anxiety UK.

Thank you for using PayPal.

Donation Details

Date:	17 June 2020
Transaction ID:	5NJ25817352090109
Purpose:	Anxiety UK Donation
Reference:	
Donation to:	Anxiety UK
Donation from:	abbey.palmer34@yahoo.com
Donation amount:	£20.00 GBP

Total amount of this transaction

£20.00 GBP

Appendix 3: Full list of Amitriptyline side effects

Agranulocytosis; alopecia; anxiety; appetite abnormal; arrhythmias; asthenia; bone marrow depression; breast enlargement; cardiac conduction disorders; coma; concentration impaired; confusion; constipation; delirium; delusions; diarrhoea; dizziness; dry mouth; dysarthria; eosinophilia; epigastric distress; face oedema; galactorrhoea; gynaecomastia; hallucination; headache; hepatic disorders; hyperhidrosis; hyperpyrexia; hypertension; hyponatraemia; hypotension; leucopenia; mood altered; movement disorders; mydriasis; myocardial infarction; nausea; neuroleptic malignant syndrome; oral disorders; palpitations; paralytic ileus; peripheral neuropathy; photosensitivity reaction; seizure; sensation abnormal; sexual dysfunction; SIADH; skin reactions; sleep disorders; stroke; sudden cardiac death; suicidal tendencies; syncope; taste altered; testicular swelling; thrombocytopenia; tinnitus; tremor; urinary disorders; urinary tract dilation; vision disorders; vomiting; weight changes; withdrawal syndrome.

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