

# Acupuncture for the Holistic Treatment of Chemotherapy Induced Peripheral Neuropathy

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## Background:

Chemotherapy induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN) is a disabling condition resulting from neurotoxicity. Physical symptoms including pain and numbness can lead to loss of function, reduced mobility, low mood and reduced quality of life. A growing body of evidence supports the use of acupuncture in the management of pain with relatively few contraindications to treatment. A study by Lu et al (2020) showed improvement in some of the physical symptoms of peripheral neuropathy in breast cancer patients with acupuncture intervention but there is little evidence to support the holistic effect that acupuncture can have in this patient group.

## Aims and objectives:

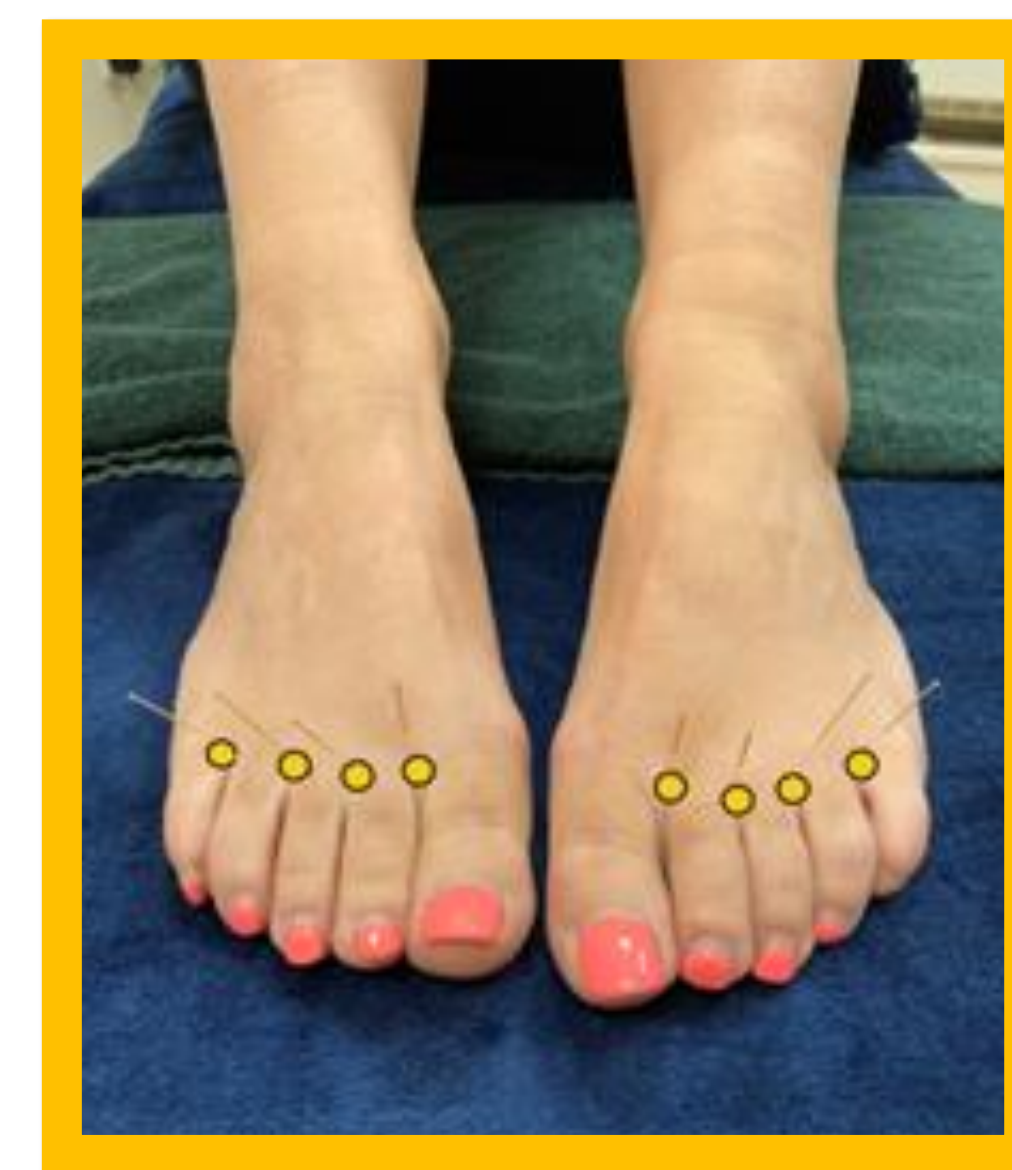
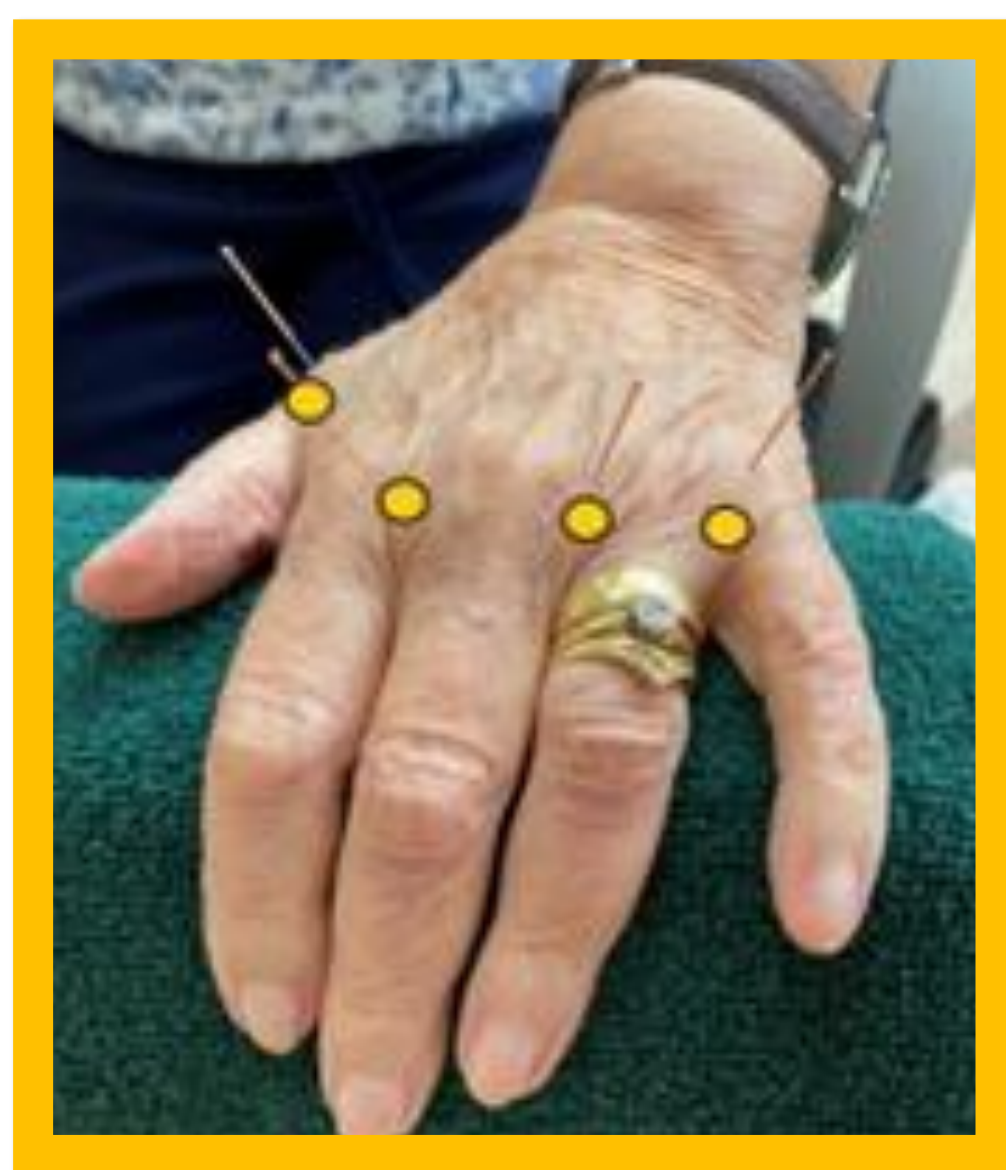
The aim is to review the holistic effect of acupuncture for CIPN. This multi case review investigated changes in physical, social, emotional and functional wellbeing as well as specific physical neuropathy symptoms before and after acupuncture intervention.

## Method:

Patients presenting with symptoms of CIPN were considered for acupuncture. Acupuncture points were selected based on individual assessment and presenting symptoms. Acupuncture points Bafeng (Ex-LE10) and Baxie (Ex-UE9) were included for CIPN where appropriate. Outcomes were measured using a Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy Neurotoxicity (FACT/GOG-NTX) self-assessment questionnaire completed prior to commencing acupuncture and repeated at the end of the treatment course.



Acupuncture points Baxie (Ex-UE9)

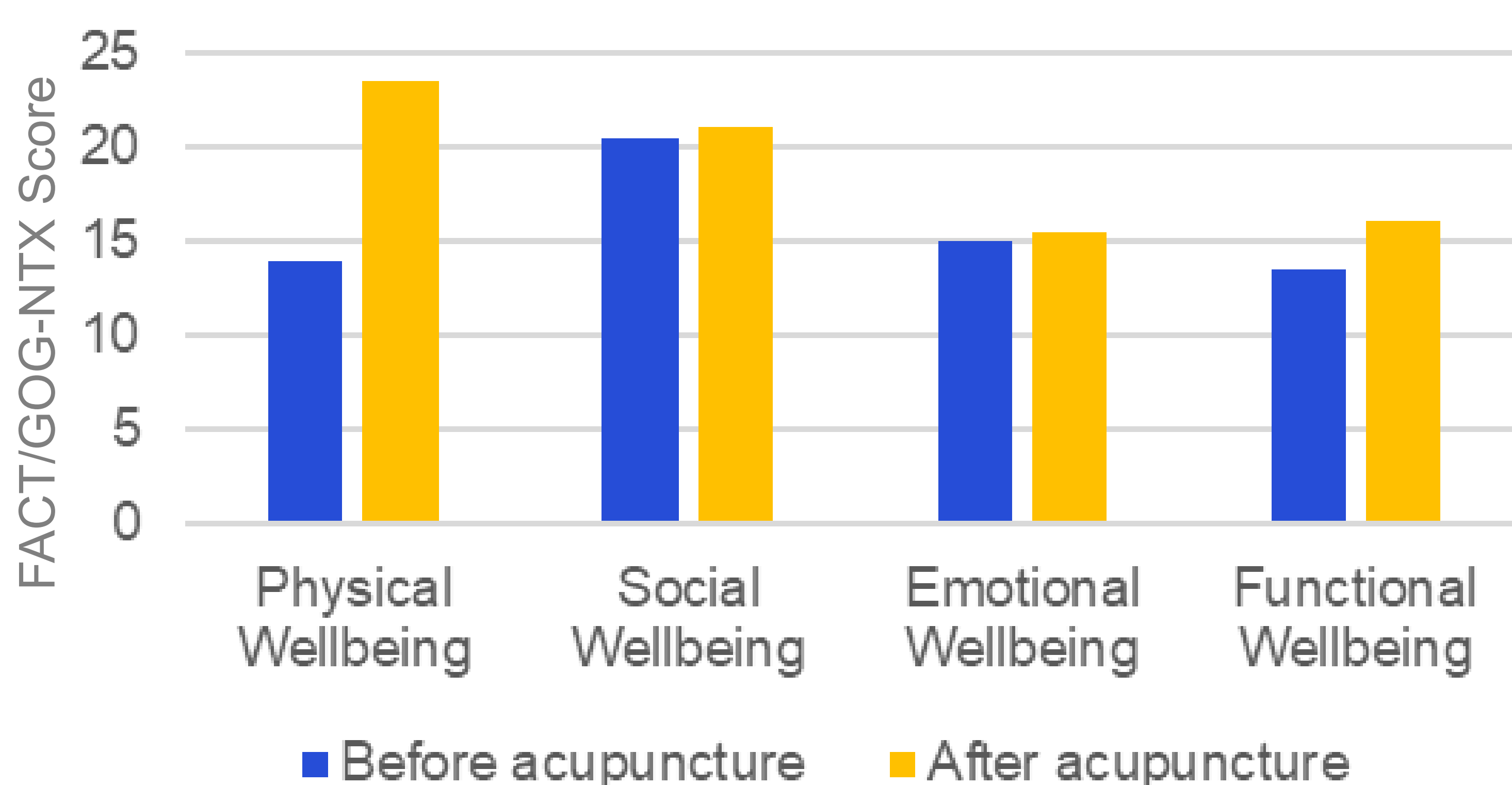


Acupuncture points Ba Feng (Ex-LE10)

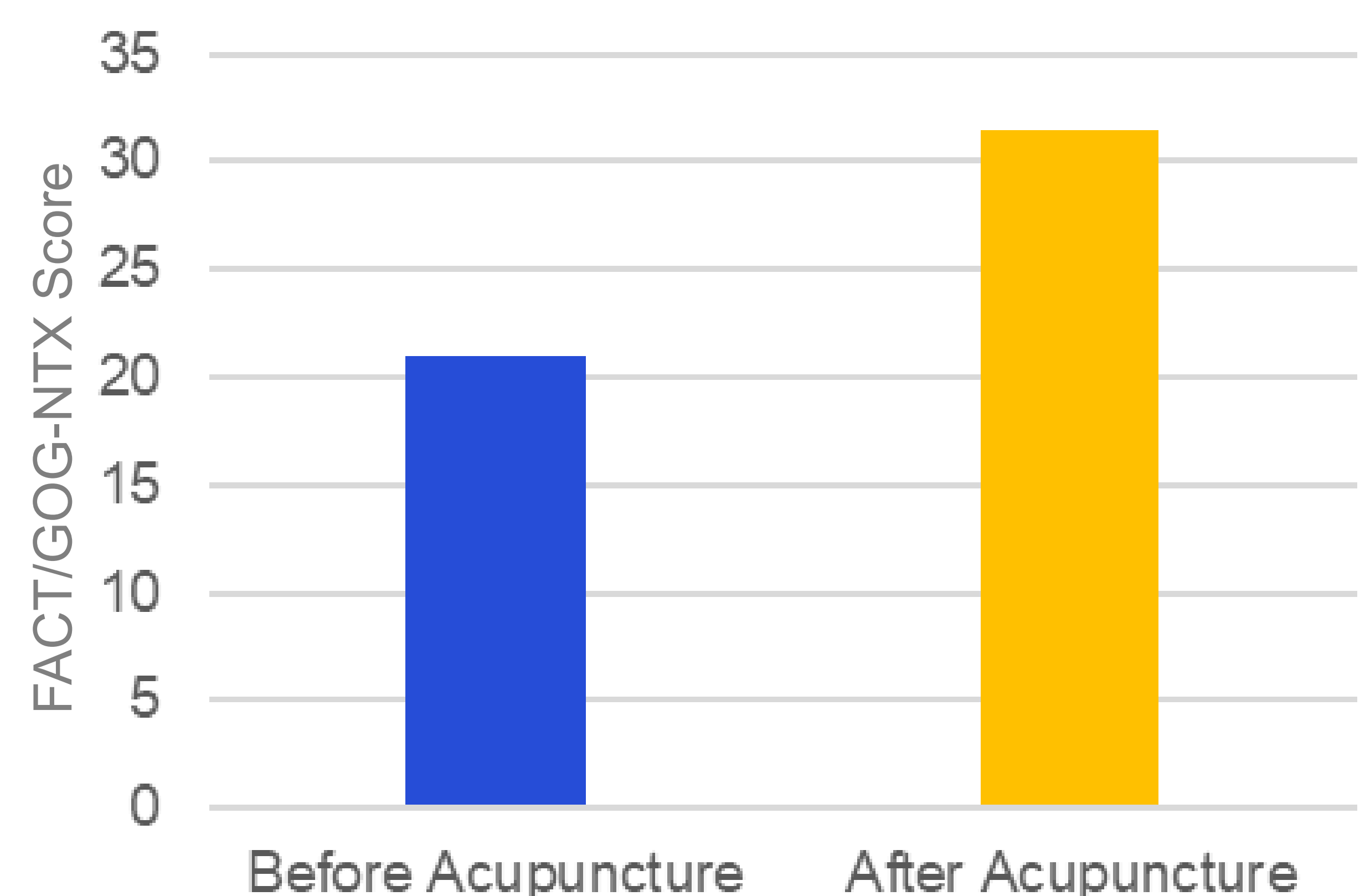
## Results:

The FACT/GOG-Ntx questionnaire demonstrated improvements across all aspects of wellbeing and in neuropathy specific symptoms following a course of acupuncture. The higher the score is indicative of a better the quality of life. The greatest improvement was in physical wellbeing with a mean improvement of 33.5% (range 25%-46%). Questions on neuropathy specific symptoms showed mean improvement of 24% after treatment with acupuncture (range 14%-34%).

### Holistic Wellbeing Scores



### Neuropathy Specific Scores



## Conclusion:

The FACT/GOG-Ntx questionnaire is an effective and sensitive tool for identifying changes in holistic wellbeing in this group of patients. Acupuncture offers a cheap, safe, non-pharmacological option for managing the symptoms of CIPN. The holistic nature of acupuncture has the benefit of being able to target multiple symptoms from different dimensions of a person's overall wellbeing. While physical wellbeing and symptoms of neuropathy have shown most improvement with acupuncture intervention, improvements in patients level of function, emotional health and social interactions have also improved. These improvements are indicators of overall improved quality of life.

Reference: Lu W, Giobbie-Hurder A, Freedman RA, Shin IH, Lin NU, Partridge AH, Rosenthal DS, Ligibel JA. Acupuncture for Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy in Breast Cancer Survivors: A Randomized Controlled Pilot Trial. *Oncologist*. 2020 Apr 25 (4):310-318. doi: 10.1634/theoncologist.2019-0489. Licence granted for the use of questionnaire from FACIT.org

