

13. Diseases of the Musculoskeletal and Connective Tissue

Reference

Itoh K. Effect of trigger point acupuncture treatment on chronic pain in the elderly - usefulness of acupuncture for treating chronic low back pain -*. *Mansei Totsu (The Journal of the Japanese Society for the Study of Chronic Pain)* 2004; 23(1): 83–8 (in Japanese with English abstract). Ichushi Web ID: 2005066965

1. Objectives

To compare the effect of acupuncture treatment at trigger points versus at acupuncture points in the back on chronic low back pain in the elderly.

2. Design

Randomized controlled trial using sealed envelopes for allocation (RCT-envelope).

3. Setting

Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, the Meiji University of Oriental Medicine (current Meiji University of Integrative Medicine) Hospital, Kyoto, Japan.

4. Participants

Eighteen elderly patients aged 65 years or older with low back pain for at least 6 months.

5. Intervention

Arm 1: Trigger point treatment group. Disposable stainless steel needles (0.16×40 mm, 0.18×50 mm) were inserted at up to 18 trigger points detected by palpation and retained for 10 minutes. One cycle consisted of 3 once-weekly treatments (3 weeks) followed by a 3-week wash out period; two cycles were administered overall (a total of 12 weeks) (n=9).

Arm 2: Acupuncture point treatment group. Disposable stainless steel needles (0.16×40 mm) were inserted at acupuncture points in the back, BL23 (腎兪), BL25 (大腸兪), GB30 (環跳), BL31 (上髎), BL33 (中髎), BL54 (秩辺), BL40 (委中), BL60 (崑崙), and GB34 (陽陵泉), and retained for 10 minutes. The frequency and duration of the treatment were the same as in Arm 1 (n=9).

6. Main outcome measures

Low back and leg pain intensity rated on a visual analogue scale (VAS) at each of 9 time points: before the start of the treatment (once), one week after each treatment session (6 times), and at the end of each wash-out period (twice). Roland Morris Disability Questionnaire (RMDQ) score was recorded at each of 5 time points: before the start of the treatment (once), at the end of each treatment period (twice), and at the end of each wash-out period (twice).

7. Main results

Improvement in VAS score was greater in Arm 1 than in Arm 2. In both arms, RMDQ scores were improved when compared with the pre-treatment values. The P value was not described in the original article.

8. Conclusions

Trigger point acupuncture treatment reduces low back pain more effectively in the elderly compared with the standard acupuncture point treatment.

9. From acupuncture and moxibustion medicine perspective

The author mentioned that the formation of trigger points may play a role in the development of low back and leg pain in the elderly.

10. Safety assessment in the article

Not mentioned.

11. Abstractor's comments

This study is interesting and appreciated in that it compares the efficacy of acupuncture point treatment with that of trigger point acupuncture treatment. However, the following points should have been included or discussed: 1) P values and a discussion of the statistical analyses of results; 2) the small sample size; and 3) no flow chart. This study seems valuable as it attempted to demonstrate the need for treatment of muscles, including trigger points, in the elderly.

12. Abstractor and date

Hosaka M, 11 September 2011.