

13. Diseases of the Musculoskeletal and Connective Tissue

Reference

Yun X, Suzuki S, Urata S, et al. Therapeutic effect of the treatment of sciatica due to cold-wetness evil using an electro-warming needle. *Toho Igaku (Eastern Medicine)* 2005; 21(3): 25–7 (in Japanese with English abstract). Ichushi Web ID: 2006072612

1. Objectives

To evaluate the efficacy of electrothermal acupuncture for treating sciatica due to "cold-wetness evil (寒湿)."

2. Design

Randomized controlled trial (RCT).

3. Setting

Not described.

4. Participants

Sixty-four patients with sciatica due to "cold-wetness evil" (45 males and 19 females, mean age, 38.4 and 35.6 years for the two groups).

5. Intervention

Arm 1: Electrothermal needle group. Using DZR-1-type electrothermal acupuncture apparatus, size 6 electrothermal needles were inserted perpendicularly to a depth of 1–1.5 cun at the main acupuncture points BL54 (秩辺), BL37 (殷門) or GB31 (風市), BL40 (委中), BL57 (承山), or GB34 (陽陵泉) on the affected side, and stimulation with a current of 60–80 mA was applied. In addition, filiform needles were inserted perpendicularly at the adjunct acupuncture points BL25 (大腸俞) and BL26 (關元俞) bilaterally, and GB30 (環跳), GB31 (風市), or BL37 (殷門), GB34 (陽陵泉) or BL57 (承山), GB39 (懸鐘), GB40 (丘墟), BL60 (昆崙) on the affected side. A lifting and thrusting draining method was performed. The procedure was applied every 10 minutes. Needles were retained for 40 minutes (n=34).

Arm 2: Ordinary needle group. Filiform needles were inserted perpendicularly to a depth of 1–1.5 cun at the main acupuncture points, and a neutral supplementation and draining method was performed. Similar treatment was applied at the adjunct acupuncture points (n=30). ("Cun" used in this section is based on location of points by bone standard [骨度法] and is different from the linear measure "sun [3.03 cm]" [尺度法].)

6. Main outcome measures

Therapeutic effects were determined on a 3-point scale: cure, response, and nonresponse.

7. Main results

In Arm 1, cure was obtained in 23 patients and response in 9, resulting in an efficacy rate of 94.1%. In Arm 2, cure and response were obtained in 12 and 11 patients, respectively, resulting in an efficacy rate of 76.7%. When comparing the two arms, therapeutic effect was significantly superior in Arm 1 ($P<0.05$).

8. Conclusions

Electrothermal acupuncture is effective for treating sciatica due to "cold-wetness evil."

9. From acupuncture and moxibustion medicine perspective

Electrothermal acupuncture was prescribed based on the traditional Chinese medical diagnosis, and administered using the traditional Chinese medical procedure. In the Discussion, fire needling was mentioned.

10. Safety assessment in the article

Not described.

11. Abstractor's comments

This study is highly appreciated for demonstrating the efficacy of treatment with electrothermal needles as compared with that of treatment with ordinary filiform needles. However, the treatment environment is not clear because the settings are not described. It is also unclear whether the study was an appropriate randomized controlled trial since the method for randomization was not reported. Detailed analysis of the assessment is also missing. Despite these omissions, this is a valuable study that may provide an opportunity for finding new therapies.

12. Abstractor and date

Hosaka M, 11 September 2011.