

13. Diseases of the Musculoskeletal and Connective Tissue

Reference

Inoue M, Kitakoji H, Ishizaki N, et al. Relief of low back pain immediately after acupuncture treatment – a randomised, placebo controlled trial. *Acupuncture in Medicine*. 2006; 24(3): 103–8. Pubmed ID: 17013356

1. Objectives

To evaluate the immediate effect of tender point acupuncture on low back pain.

2. Design

Randomized controlled trial (RCT).

3. Setting

Center of Acupuncture Science, the Meiji University of Oriental Medicine (current Meiji University of Integrative Medicine), Kyoto, Japan.

4. Participants

Thirty-one patients with low back pain who presented to the center between April 2003 and December 2004 (21 males and 10 females, mean age in the two groups: 68 and 70 years).

5. Intervention

Arm 1: Acupuncture group. A stainless steel needle (Seirin Co., Ltd.; 0.18×40 mm) was inserted to a depth of 20 mm at the most tender point and sparrow pecking technique was applied for 20 seconds (n=15).

Arm 2: Sham acupuncture group. A guide tube was tapped at the most tender point, without using a needle (n=16).

6. Main outcome measures

Visual Analog Scale (VAS) score for pain intensity and Schober test (a test of spinal mobility) score.

7. Main results

Between-group comparison of the change from before to immediately after the treatment showed significant improvement in both VAS ($P=0.020$) and Schober test ($P<0.001$) scores in Arm 1.

8. Conclusions

Acupuncture at the most tender point has an immediate relieving effect on low back pain.

9. From acupuncture and moxibustion medicine perspective

The authors mentioned the descending inhibitory system or activation of spinal inhibitory system as a mechanism underlying the effect of tender point acupuncture.

10. Safety assessment in the article

Not mentioned.

11. Abstractor's comments

This study is highly appreciated for testing the effect of acupuncture in an evaluator- and patient-masked trial. The success of the masking was also described. Because the study objective was to examine the immediate relieving effect of acupuncture, no flow chart was presented and no follow-up was carried out, but the longer-term effect is a concern. If the sham acupuncture technique is modified, further development may be expected.

12. Abstractor and date

Hosaka M, 11 September 2011.