

13. Diseases of the Musculo Skeletal System and Connective Tissue

Reference

Kwon YD, Lee SG, Lee CW, et al. The short-term efficacy of acupuncture for chronic low back pain: Randomized sham controlled trial. *Hanbang-Jaehwal-Uihakgwa-Hakhoeji (Journal of Oriental Rehabilitation Medicine)* 2007; 17(2): 123–32 (in Korean with English abstract).

1. Objectives

To evaluate the efficacy of acupuncture for chronic low back pain.

2. Design

Randomized controlled trial (RCT).

3. Setting

One Oriental hospital (Oriental Medical Hospital at Gwangju, Wonkwang University), Republic of Korea.

4. Participants

Patients with chronic low back pain over 3 months (n=50).

5. Intervention

Arm 1: Manual acupuncture (n=25).

Arm 2: Sham acupuncture (n=25).

Fourteen needles were inserted into the meridian points (Arm 1) or non-meridian points (Arm 2) and retained for 20 minutes.

6. Main outcome measures

Pain rated on a visual analogue scale (VAS), Roland Disability Questionnaire (RDQ) score, Patient Global Assessment (PGA) score, and digital temperature by thermography (DT).

7. Main results

Pain relief was significant (VAS score was significantly decreased) in Arm 1 after 2 and 4 weeks of treatment and in Arm 2 after 4 weeks of treatment ($P<0.05$). RDQ score was decreased in both arms, though not significantly. There was no significant between-group difference in VAS and RDQ and no significant between-group difference in DT and PGA score over the course of treatment.

8. Conclusions

Short-term manual acupuncture is an effective and safe treatment for chronic low back pain. Sham acupuncture appears to be equally effective and safe.

9. Safety assessment in the article

Three subjects complained of fatigue (n=1 [Arm 1], n=2 [Arm 2]). There were no serious adverse events.

10. Abstractor's comments

Several types of sham acupuncture have been developed, but the sham control used in this study is an obstacle to evaluating the effect of acupuncture. No difference between real acupuncture and sham acupuncture was found. Other studies have also reported that sham acupuncture and real acupuncture have similar effectiveness. To understand the reason for this result, a study should be conducted to determine whether this lack of a difference is due to a design problem, small number of subjects, or other variables.

11. Abstractor and date

Kim HJ, 17 August 2010.