



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Creating an Instrument for a Successful Double-blind Acupuncture Placebo

Sungchul Kim^{1,2*}

¹Wonkwang University, Iksan, South Korea

²Wonkwang University Oriental Medicine Hospital, Gwangju, South Korea

Received: Feb 1, 2008
Accepted: Jun 4, 2008

KEY WORDS:

double blind;
placebo acupuncture
needle;
random allocation;
real acupuncture;
sham acupuncture;
single blind

Abstract

Due to the lack of an appropriate placebo, the general scientific community has questioned studies on the effects of acupuncture. The double-blind placebo-controlled clinical trial is said to be the gold standard for showing that a treatment has a specific effect over placebo. But acupuncture treatments undoubtedly involve placebo effects. In order to aid the study of the effects of acupuncture and to give more credibility to acupuncture studies in the eyes of the general scientific community using evidence based medicine, a thoroughly tested double-blind placebo for acupuncture needs to be developed. Investigations on a sham endermic acupuncture needle were performed. Experienced subjects were tested for an ability to distinguish real acupuncture from sham acupuncture in appearance and skin sensation. From receiving real or sham acupuncture treatment, experienced subjects from the public correctly identified 55.8% of treatments from appearance and 56.7% from skin sensation. Acupuncturists identified 45% of treatments from appearance and 55% from skin sensation. When experienced subjects of acupuncture treatment from the public received both real and sham treatment side-by-side in each hand, they were able to identify 60% with appearance and sensation and 66.7% with only skin sensation. It is possible that this sham acupuncture could be used as the placebo for further research on the effects of acupuncture.

1. Introduction

Since the inception of clinical research into acupuncture, the dilemma of how to create an appropriate placebo has hindered progress. There has been no good method of managing all confounding variables, particularly the implementation of a double-blind protocol into experiments. Thus far, research on the effects of acupuncture have used no proven methods of achieving a double-blind study and have been either single-blind or without any blinding. Research on medical drugs has been advancing strongly as a placebo is very easy to

implement, however acupuncture treatment holds a unique position in the medical research community, in that most believe that it cannot be administered in a way in which both acupuncturist and subject do not know whether the subject is receiving real or sham treatment. This study was designed to test an instrument invented by the author to prove whether or not it has an effect like that of a placebo pill in medical drug research.

The subject receiving the placebo treatment should believe that they are receiving the real treatment [1], which entails giving the treatment without actually performing any sort of legitimate

*Corresponding author. Wonkwang University Oriental Medicine Hospital, 543-8 Juwoldong Namgu, Gwangju City, South Korea.
E-mail: kscnd@wonkwang.ac.kr

operation but still being impossible to distinguish from the real treatment. Presently there are several sham acupuncture needles that have been invented. Some methods used for the placebo have included pricking the wrong positions [2,3] which is out of the traditional acupuncture point or meridian and superficially stabbing at inappropriate acupoints without manipulation [4]. However, these minimal acupuncture are inadequate placebos because they can have physiological effects [5,6] such as Diffuse Noxious Inhibitory Controls on the patient. Sham transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation [7,8], sham tablets [9] and inoperative laser acupuncture [10] have been used as control groups, however their effects cannot be appropriately identified as truly a placebo effect [11] as afterwards the participants were comparing their treatment to the real acupuncture group and finding differences causing non-placebo psychological effects. Another inadequate method for the placebo was to simply poke the subject with the fingernail [12], without breaking the skin, and then tell them that they were receiving real acupuncture treatment. Another attempted method was only stimulating with the acupuncture pipe [13] on the skin and lightly pricking with a real acupuncture needle on the superficial skin [14]. One method was to only let

the acupuncture needle enter to the plastic stopple at the edge of the acupuncture pipe [15] and because the edge of the needle was flat, it did not puncture the skin but only pressed it [16]. In addition, Streitberg's method was designed using a blunted needle inserted into a prop to give the appearance that acupuncture was being administered through the skin when it was not [17]. By using this method for a placebo in an experiment on the clinical treatment of rotator cuff tendonitis, results were acquired favoring real acupuncture over sham acupuncture [18]. However, the key problem with these results was that the experiment did not successfully achieve a double blind design because the acupuncturist knows about the sham acupuncture needle.

Endermic acupuncture is pertinent to the search for an acupuncture placebo because its small needle and patch are easy to imitate. Kim Sham Acupuncture (Figures 1 and 2) uses an endermic acupuncture needle with a blunt tip that cannot pierce the skin to induce a medical effect but can also not be easily identified by acupuncturists or experienced subjects of acupuncture treatment, either from examining it or feeling it on the skin. The author wanted to see if this Kim Sham Acupuncture could be properly utilized as a placebo, for the scientific benefit of the many frequent patients who partake in the

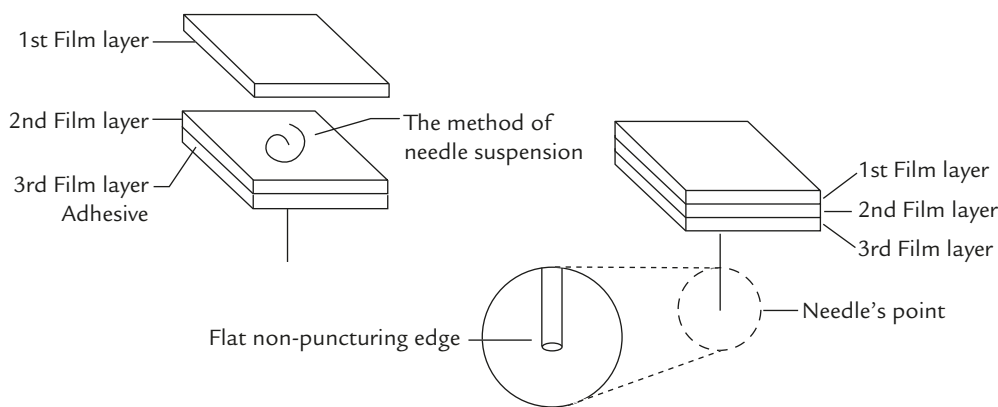


Figure 1 Kim Sham acupuncture.

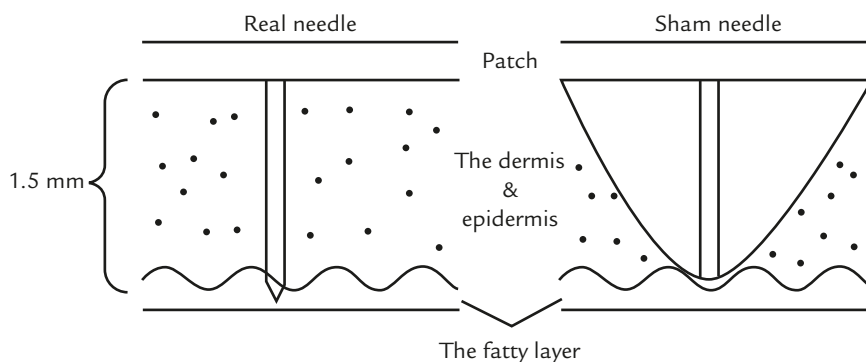


Figure 2 Real needle and sham needle.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/3098813>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/3098813>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)