



RECOMMENDED ARTICLES

In this issue of the journal, the Recommended Articles are selected from the journals citing the articles of the Journal of Acupuncture and Meridian Studies and from the Journal of Pharmacopuncture (ISSN: 1226-4849) published in English.

(1) Spine (Phila Pa 1976), 2005, Volume 30, Issue 8, Article number 944–963

Acupuncture and Dry-needling for Low Back Pain: An Updated Systematic Review Within the Framework of the Cochrane Collaboration

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Abstract

Objectives: To assess the effects of acupuncture and dry-needling for the treatment of nonspecific low back pain.

Background: Low back pain is usually a self-limiting condition that tends to improve spontaneously over time. However, for many people, back pain becomes a chronic or recurrent problem for which a large variety of therapeutic interventions are employed.

Search strategy: We updated the searches from 1996 to February 2003 in CENTRAL, MEDLINE, and EMBASE. We also searched the Chinese Cochrane Centre database of clinical trials and Japanese databases to February 2003.

Selection criteria: Randomized controlled trials of acupuncture (that involved needling) or dry-needling for adults with nonspecific acute/subacute or chronic low back pain.

Data collection and analysis: Two reviewers independently assessed methodologic quality (using the criteria recommended by the Cochrane Back Review Group) and extracted data. The trials were combined using meta-analysis methods or levels of evidence when the data reported did not allow statistical pooling.

Results: Thirty-five randomized clinical trials were included: 20 were published in English, 7 in Japanese, 5 in Chinese, and 1 each in Norwegian, Polish, and German. There were only 3 trials of acupuncture for acute low back pain. These studies did not justify firm conclusions because of their small sample sizes and low methodologic quality. For chronic low back pain, there is evidence of pain relief and functional improvement for acupuncture compared to no treatment or sham therapy. These effects were only observed immediately after the end of the sessions and in short-term follow-up. There is also evidence that acupuncture, added to other conventional therapies, relieves pain and improves function better than the conventional therapies alone. However, the effects are only small. Dry-needling appears to be a useful adjunct to other therapies for chronic low back pain. No clear recommendations could be made about the most effective acupuncture technique.

Conclusions: The data do not allow firm conclusions regarding the effectiveness of acupuncture for acute low back pain. For chronic low back pain, acupuncture is more effective for pain relief and functional improvement than no treatment or sham treatment immediately after treatment and in the short-term only. Acupuncture is not more effective than other conventional and "alternative" treatments. The data suggest that acupuncture and dry-needling may be useful adjuncts to other therapies for chronic low back pain. Because most of the studies were of lower methodologic quality, there is a clear need for higher quality trials in this area.

Keywords: systematic review, meta-analysis, Cochrane Collaboration, acupuncture, low back pain

(2) Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, Volume 17, Issue 4, 1999

The Value of Acupuncture Detoxification Programs in a Substance Abuse Treatment System

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Abstract

Our purpose is to compare baseline characteristics and detoxification readmission rates of clients treated at outpatient acupuncture programs and at short-term residential programs, two options available to persons seeking substance abuse detoxification. This was a retrospective cohort study using data on clients discharged from publicly funded detoxification programs in Boston between January 1993 and September 1994. Multivariate models were used to examine the effect on 6-month detoxification readmission rates of treatment at residential detoxification programs (used by 6,907 clients) versus at outpatient acupuncture programs (used by 1,104 clients) after adjusting for baseline differences. Acupuncture clients were less likely to be readmitted for detoxification within 6 months (odds ratio [OR] 0.71, 95% confidence interval [CI] 0.53–0.95). Similar results were found when the analysis was performed on a subsample of clients that were relatively similar in terms of baseline characteristics (OR 0.61, 95% CI 0.39–0.94). We determined that acupuncture detoxification programs are a useful component of a substance abuse treatment system.

Keywords: acupuncture, detoxification, substance abuse treatment

(3) PLoS ONE, 2009, Volume 47, Issue 3, Article number 1077–85

Traditional Chinese Acupuncture and Placebo (Sham) Acupuncture are Differentiated by their Effects on Mu-opioid Receptors (MORs).

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Abstract

Controversy remains regarding the mechanisms of acupuncture analgesia. A prevailing theory, largely unproven in humans, is that it involves the activation of endogenous opioid antinociceptive systems and mu-opioid receptors (MORs). This is also a neurotransmitter system that mediates the effects of placebo-induced analgesia. This overlap in potential mechanisms may explain the lack of differentiation between traditional acupuncture and either non-traditional or sham acupuncture in multiple controlled clinical trials. We compared both short- and long-term effects of traditional Chinese acupuncture (TA) versus sham acupuncture (SA) treatment on *in vivo* MOR binding availability in chronic pain patients diagnosed with fibromyalgia (FM). Patients were randomized to receive either TA or SA treatment over the course of 4 weeks. Positron emission tomography (PET) with (11)C-carfentanil was performed once during the first treatment session and then repeated a month later following the eighth treatment. Acupuncture therapy evoked short-term increases in MOR binding potential, in multiple pain and sensory processing regions including the cingulate (dorsal and subgenual), insula, caudate, thalamus, and amygdala. Acupuncture therapy also evoked long-term increases in MOR binding potential in some of the same structures including the cingulate (dorsal and perigenual), caudate, and amygdala. These short- and long-term effects were absent in the sham group where small reductions were observed, an effect more consistent with previous placebo PET studies. Long-term increases in MOR BP following TA were also associated with greater reductions in clinical pain. These findings suggest that divergent MOR processes may mediate clinically relevant analgesic effects for acupuncture and sham acupuncture.

Keywords: Acupuncture, Opioid, Mu, Fibromyalgia, Pain, Positron emission tomography

(4) Journal of Pharmacopuncture, Vol. 19 No. 1, p37–44, 2016

Nanopharmaceutical Approach for Enhanced Anti-cancer Activity of Betulinic Acid in Lung-cancer Treatment via Activation of PARP: Interaction with DNA as a Target

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Abstract

Objectives: This study examined the relative efficacies of a derivative of betulinic acid (dBA) and its poly (lactide- co-glycolide) (PLGA) nano-encapsulated form in A549 lung cancer cells *in vivo* and in co-mutagen [sodium arsenite (SA) + benzo[*a*]pyrene (BaP)]-induced lung cancer in mice *in vivo*.

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