

Effect of acupuncture treatment on smoking cessation in smokers from Hong Kong

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE: To analyze the characteristics of smokers treated with acupuncture for smoking cessation in Hong Kong.

METHODS: A total of 2051 subjects were recruited in a clinical pilot research project "acupuncture for smoking cessation", which was conducted jointly by Institute of Acupuncture and Moxibustion, China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences and Hong Kong Pok Oi Hospital from January of 2011 to December of 2013. The characteristics of study subjects, including baseline information, smoking background, intention to quit and influencing factors were analyzed.

RESULTS: The majority of subjects treated with ac-

puncture for smoking cessation in Hong Kong was male (66.7%), but the proportion of female smokers in this study (33.3%) was higher than that of female smokers in Hong Kong population (13.8%, $P < 0.05$). Subjects were at the mean age of 43.83 years old, of which the percentage of females aged 31-40 years was the highest (38.8%, $P < 0.05$). The mean duration of smoking was 25.49 years. The number of cigarettes smoked per day was 17.57 cigarettes. Fagerstrom Test for Nicotine Dependence (FTND) was 5.29 points. Most of the subjects had attempted quitting smoking (81.42%). The confidence index (7.44 points) and the readiness to quit smoking (8.13 points) were high. Subjects quitting smoking were mostly due to health cause (81.91%). The majority of subjects were at the level of middle school (61.63%). The higher the educational level was, the lower the tobacco dependence was and the higher the confidence in successfully quitting smoking was. 50.27% of subjects chose acupuncture for smoking cessation mainly through friends, television and network publicity. Subjects who had received acupuncture had the highest confidence index, while those who wanted to try a new method had the lower confidence index.

CONCLUSION: Acupuncture for smoking cessation was more popular in female smokers, especially those aged 31-40 years. The effectiveness of acupuncture-smoking cessation was most significant in the smokers over 60.

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Key words: Acupuncture; Smoking cessation; Tobacco use disorder

INTRODUCTION

Smoking is one of the important risk factors for lung cancer, chronic respiratory disease, coronary heart disease, stroke, etc. It is estimated that there will be 8 million tobacco-related deaths per year in the world by 2030.¹ In Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), there are approximately 680 000 smokers with over 6900 deaths every year. The first five death-related diseases all associated with smoking.² Healthcare expenses and losses on gross domestic product (GDP) due to smoking or passive smoking reach 5.3 billion Hong Kong dollar (HKD) per year.³

In order to enhance and coordinate HKSAR Government's tobacco control efforts, Hong Kong Department of Health established the Tobacco Control Office in February of 2001 to provide smoking cessation information, psychological treatment and medication treatment for smokers through many different smoking cessation services, such as smoking cessation hotline, smoking cessation clinics and interactive online cessation center.⁴ In order to further strengthen tobacco control efforts, a clinical pilot project "acupuncture for smoking cessation" supported by Tobacco Control Office of Hong Kong Department of Health was conducted jointly by Institute of Acupuncture and Moxibustion China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences and Hong Kong Pok Oi Hospital to explore the effectiveness of acupuncture for smoking cessation.

Subjects involved in the pilot project "acupuncture for smoking cessation" were analyzed to understand the characteristics of smokers in Hong Kong and to provide some evidences for the clinical application of acupuncture for smoking cessation.

METHODS

Data collection

Data of this study were collected from the active smoking subjects enrolled in the clinical pilot project "acupuncture for smoking cessation", which supported by Tobacco Control Office of Hong Kong Department of Health and conducted jointly by Institute of Acupuncture and Moxibustion China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences and Hong Kong Pok Oi Hospital.

In this project, daily smokers at the age of 18-75 years old who was willing to quit smoking were included. After signing the informed consent, subjects were treated with acupuncture combined with psychological treatment. The acupoints of bilateral Baihui (GV 20), Yintang (EX-HN 3), Lieque (LU 7), Hegu (LI 4), Neiguan (PC 6), Sanyinjiao (SP 6), Taichong (LR 3) and Zusanli (ST 36) were selected. Needles were retained for 20 min. Subjects were asked to receive acupuncture for at least 6 times within a month. In addition to acupuncture treatment, subjects also accepted psychological treatment based on their self-condition for at least

15 min every time. Acupuncture treatment lasted for 8 weeks. Abstinence rates at 8th week, 26th week and 52nd week were taken as the outcome measures. This study was approved by ethic committee of Hong Kong Pok Oi Hospital. The recruitment, inclusion and acupuncture methods of this observational study have been published.⁵

The clinical data of enrolled subjects was classified as follows: (a) Demographic information: gender, age and educational background; (b) Smoking background: smoking duration, number of cigarettes smoked per day, Fagerstrom Test for Nicotine Dependence (FTND),⁶ previous attempts for smoking cessation and exhaled carbon monoxide level before acupuncture; (c) Intention to quit: confidence index of smoking cessation (using a visual analogue scale method: with a ruler that had a scale from 0 cm to 10 cm, the subjects were told to point out their confidence of smoking cessation, and the researchers recorded the number on the ruler), the readiness to quit (using a visual analogue scale: with a ruler that had a scale from 0 cm to 10 cm, the subjects were told to point out their readiness to quit smoking, and the doctor recorded the number on the ruler), the reasons for quitting and the reasons for choosing acupuncture.

Statistical analysis

All data were analyzed by using SPSS software (IBM Corp. Released 2010. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 19.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp. USA). Continuous data were expressed as mean \pm standard deviation ($\bar{x} \pm s$). Paired t-test was performed to test for intra-group comparison and two samples t-test was for inter-group comparison. Count data was tested using Chi-square statistics. $P < 0.05$ was the statistical significant level.

RESULTS

Baseline characteristics of subjects

From 2011 to 2013, a total of 2051 subjects were recruited in the "acupuncture for smoking cessation". Their baseline information was shown in Table 1.

Characteristics of smokers according to gender

Compared with female smokers, male smokers were older, had a longer history of smoking and had a heavier tobacco dependence, but they also had more confidence in quitting smoking (all $P < 0.05$) (Table 2).

Characteristics of smokers according to gender and age

The majority (58.3%) of subjects were aged 31-50 years, most of which were female smokers aging 31-40 years (Table 3).

Characteristics of smokers according to age/smoking background

Subjects younger than 20 years old had the highest

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