13. Diseases of the Musculo Skeletal System and Connective Tissue

Reference

Park IS, Jung CY, Jang MK, et al. A randomized clinical trial of local acupuncture points compared with distal acupuncture points in degenerative osteoarthritis on knee. *Daehan-Chimgu-Hakhoeji* (*Journal of Korean Acupuncture & Moxibustion Society*) 2008; 25(2): 227–42 (in Korean with English abstract).

1. Objectives

To compare the effect of treatment at local acupuncture points and distal acupuncture points on knee degenerative osteoarthritis.

2. Design

Randomized controlled trial (RCT).

3. Setting

One Oriental hospital (Dongkuk University Ilsan Oriental Hospital), Republic of Korea.

4. Participants

Patients with knee degenerative osteoarthritis meeting American College of Rheumatology (ACR) classification criteria (age, 55–80; n=26).

5. Intervention

Arm 1: Washout (2 weeks) followed by acupuncture (local acupuncture points), washout, and acupuncture (distal acupuncture points) (n=13).

Arm 2: Washout (2 weeks), followed by acupuncture (distal acupuncture points), washout, and acupuncture (local acupuncture points) (n=13).

Acupuncture was performed 3 times per week for 2 weeks.

Local acupuncture points (i.e., acupuncture points at affected sites): Dubi (ST35, 犢鼻), Xiyan (EX-LE5, 膝眼), Heding (EX-LE2, 鶴頂), and Ashi (阿是).

Distal acupuncture points (i.e., acupuncture points at unaffected sites): 4 points selected from among the Ganshu (BL18, 肝俞), Shenshu (BL23, 腎俞), Kunlun (BL60, 崑崙), Xuanzhong (GB39, 懸鐘), Sanyinjiao (SP6, 三陰交), Xingjan (LR2, 行間), Jiexi (ST41, 解溪), and Taixi (KI3, 太溪) acupuncture points.

If pain was present on both sides of the body, both sides were treated (at a total of 8 acupuncture points).

Among 26 subjects, 9 dropped out.

Reasons for patient withdrawal: Pain during or after the acupuncture (n=4), relocation (n=2).

Patients with WOMAC score less than 40 (n=3) were excluded.

6. Main outcome measures

Pain assessed on a visual analogue scale (VAS), Western Ontario and McMaster Universities Osteoarthritis Index (WOMAC) score.

7. Main results

Local acupuncture significantly decreased pain VAS score and WOMAC score, and distal acupuncture significantly decreased WOMAC pain subscore and overall WOMAC score. There was a significant between-group difference in WOMAC score (47.5±17.1 [local acupuncture] *vs.* 58.1±10.5 [distal acupuncture], P=0.036).

8. Conclusions

Both treatments significantly improve osteoarthritis symptoms. Based on overall WOMAC score, local acupuncture is more effective than distal acupuncture. Efficacy does not depend on the sequence of local and distal acupuncture treatment.

9. Safety assessment in the article

No adverse events occurred.

10. Abstractor's comments

This study compared the efficacy of local acupuncture with that of distal acupuncture as treatment. A flowchart of the trial was presented, the results were recorded according to STRICTA recommendations, and the number of drop-out and excluded subjects were clearly indicated. The study was single blind, but blinding of all the subjects, investigators, and diagnosticians (but not clinicians) was possible. The authors used per protocol analysis, and the drop-out rate was very high (34.6%, 9 of 26 subjects).

11. Abstractor and date

Kim JI, 7 June 2010.