

13. Diseases of the Musculoskeletal and Connective Tissue

Reference

Ito K, Katsumi Y. Effect of acupuncture treatment on chronic low back pain with leg pain in aged patients - a controlled trial about short-term effects of trigger point acupuncture -. *Zen Nihon Shinkyu Gakkai Zasshi (Journal of the Japan Society of Acupuncture and Moxibustion)* 2005; 55 (4): 530–37 (in Japanese with English abstract). Ichushi Web ID: 2005296314

1. Objectives

To evaluate the efficacy of trigger point acupuncture treatment for chronic low back pain (LBP) with leg pain in aged patients.

2. Design

Randomized controlled trial using sealed envelopes for allocation (RCT-envelope).

3. Setting

Department of Orthopedic Surgery, the Meiji University of Oriental Medicine (current Meiji University of Integrative Medicine) Hospital, Kyoto, Japan.

4. Participants

Forty-four outpatients (aged 65 years or older) with LBP and leg pain persisting for at least 6 months.

5. Intervention

Arm 1: Standard acupuncture group (n=11), Standard acupuncture applied to traditional acupuncture points..

Arm 2: Superficial trigger point acupuncture group (n=11).

Arm 3: Deep trigger point acupuncture group (n=11).

Arm 4: Sham trigger point acupuncture group (n=11).

The intervention performed once a week for 3 weeks. Dropped out rate was 18% (8/44).

6. Main outcome measures

The intensity of LBP with leg pain was assessed using a visual analog scale (VAS), and quality of life (QOL) was assessed using the Roland-Morris Disability Questionnaire (RDQ).

7. Main results

At the end of the treatment period, pain intensity and QOL were significantly improved in Arm 3 alone compared with Arm 4 ($P<0.01$). The effects persisted during the 3-week follow-up. Comparison of final values in Arm 2 with baseline values in each arm revealed a significant effect of superficial trigger point acupuncture.

8. Conclusion

Trigger point acupuncture can be an effective treatment for chronic low back pain with leg pain in aged patients.

9. From acupuncture and moxibustion medicine perspective

The observation that deep needling of the trigger points is more effective than standard acupuncture at traditional acupuncture points is interesting, as traditional acupuncture points and trigger points are closely related. However, this matter is not discussed.

10. Safety assessment in the article

Not mentioned.

11. Abstractor's comment

This is a well-designed clinical study with four parallel arms, and the trial and analyses were appropriately conducted. The report indicates that trigger point acupuncture treatment once a week for 3 weeks significantly improves chronic low back pain (with leg pain) in the elderly. On the other hand, the report showed that standard acupuncture at traditional acupuncture points and superficial needling of the trigger points are ineffective. Sham acupuncture (mimicked needling without insertion of the needle) was used successfully for single-masking. Pain intensity was rated on a VAS with 100 as the greatest pain ever experienced, which should have been the greatest pain imaginable. Also, methods other than the envelope method, such as assignment by a computer-generated randomization list, were attempted for appropriate randomization. Regrettably there is no description of adverse events. Anyhow, more high-quality studies like this one are indicated.

12. Abstractor and date

Kawakita K, 15 December 2010.