12. Skin Diseases

Reference

Sakuraba H, Sawazaki K, Takeuchi H, et al. The effect of acupuncture in the improvement of hemodialysis patients' QOL: Practice of acupuncture treatment for itch. *Jinzo* (*The Kidney*) 2007; 30(2): 167–74 (in Japanese). Ichushi Web ID: 2008091867

1. Objectives

To evaluate the effectiveness of acupuncture for itching in hemodialysis patients.

2. Design

Quasi-randomized controlled trial (Quasi-RCT - crossover).

3. Setting

Hospital "T" (one author was affiliated with Takeuchi Hospital), Mie, Japan.

4. Participants

Eighteen hemodialysis patients (7 males, 11 females, mean age 64.9±9.8 years).

5. Intervention

Arm 1: Group A. Acupuncture (12 weeks), followed by washout (4 weeks), then no treatment (12 weeks).

A total of 24 Pyonex (0.6 mm, Seirin Co., Ltd.) press tack needles were applied, 12 by the acupuncturist and 12 by the patient. Application locations were determined by the Meridian Test. The authors mention that the treatment points for patients with strong itching were determined according to previous research, however, they do not mention the names or the number of these acupuncture points (n=10).

Arm 2: Group B. No treatment (12 weeks), followed by washout (4 weeks), then acupuncture (12 weeks). The acupuncture treatment was the same as in Arm 1 (n=8).

6. Main outcome measures

Visual analogue scale (VAS) score for itchiness assessed before and after each treatment period, for a total of 4 times. Health Related Quality of Life (HRQOL) scale SF-8™ Health Survey Japanese edition (standard) assessed before and after each treatment period, for a total of 4 times. Original acupuncture treatment questionnaire completed only once, after acupuncture treatment was stopped.

7. Main results

VAS scores in Arm 1 decreased significantly with acupuncture treatment ($P<0.01$). SF-8™ scores increased during treatment in both groups, but showed no definite trend during the no-treatment period. The original questionnaire responses showed that itchiness, stiffness, dizziness, irritability, and sluggishness decreased in many patients. A plurality of patients (n=9) preferred a combination of self-treatment and treatment by an acupuncturist. The mean number of needles used was 26.8 per week (13.4 per treatment).

8. Conclusions

Acupuncture for hemodialysis patients using press tack needles and self-treatment is effective for patient complaints, including itchiness.

9. From acupuncture and moxibustion medicine perspective

Not mentioned.

10. Safety assessment in the article

Eight adverse events were reported including aggravation of symptoms (itch [2] and low back pain [1]), fatigue (2), residual acupuncture sensation (1), incrustation at the point of needle application (1), and bruising (1).

11. Abstractor's comments

Regular long-term hemodialysis is a physical and mental burden on patients. It is important to find ways of improving the quality of life of such patients, even a little. This study is therefore very significant as it evaluates the efficacy of acupuncture for itching, including acupuncture administered by the patient at home on non-dialysis days. However, the paper does not clearly explain the link between Meridian Testing* and itching, although the authors did use the test to select points for treatment. Neither do the authors describe the location, frequency, symptoms, or period of itching. Apparently when studying diseased patients in particular, and not just hemodialysis patients, researchers need to devise interventions suited to each patient's physical condition and stratify them. The authors reported eight safety-related incidents, however they completed the study with no dropouts by shortening the press tack needle application period. This is a significant clinical study of the complaints of hemodialysis patients: further research is anticipated.

* The Meridian Test, also called the M-test, was devised by Mukaino Y. A pain or complaint that is induced by extension of a body part identifies the meridian that passes through the extended part requiring treatment.

12. Abstractor and date

Shimoichi Y, 11 September 2011.