18. Symptoms and Signs

Reference

1. Objectives
To evaluate the effect of non-medicinal treatment on pain behavior in chronic headache patients.

2. Design
Randomized controlled trial (RCT).

3. Setting
One Oriental hospital, one Western hospital (Kyunghyee University Medical Center), Republic of Korea.

4. Participants
Patients with chronic headache at least 4 hours a day for more than 15 days (n=86, age=20–65 years).

5. Intervention
Arm 1: Acupuncture applied to the Baihui (GV20, 百會), Sishencong (EX-HN23, 四神聰), Touwei (ST8, 頭維), Taiyang (EX-HN46, 太陽), Yingxiang (LI20, 迎香), Yifeng (TE17, 翳風), Fengchi (GB20, 風池), Quchi (LI11, 曲池), Zusani (ST36, 足三里), Hegu (LI4, 合谷), and Taichong (LR3, 太衝) acupoints for 20 minutes using disposable needles, twice a week for 4 weeks (n=43).

Arm 2: Nerve block therapy (stellate ganglion block at the transverse process of the 6th cervical vertebra using 7–8 ml of 1% mepivacaine) (n=43)

Of 86 subjects, 35 subjects (15 in Arm 1; 20 in Arm2) dropped out.

6. Main Outcome Measures
Headache severity evaluated on a visual analogue scale (VAS), Brief Pain Inventory (BPI).

7. Main Results
Headache score was significantly decreased in both Arm 1 (Z=–4.386, *P*=0.000) and Arm 2 (Z=–4.036, *P*=0.000), suggesting that the non-medicinal treatment also relieves headaches. Treatment also significantly increased quality of life (QOL) measures including general activity, mood, enjoyment of life, personal relationships, and sleeping, suggesting that the non-medicinal treatment is effective.

The degree of satisfaction also decreased in both groups, but not significantly.

8. Conclusions
Both 4-week treatments reduce headache and improve QOL. However, the superiority of one treatment over the other cannot be concluded. Acupuncture could be the effective treatment for chronic headache. Evaluation of cotreatments in further studies is suggested.

9. Safety assessment in the article
Not mentioned.

10. Abstractor's comments
This study compares the effectiveness of acupuncture and with that of stellate ganglion block treatment for chronic headache. Both treatments relieved chronic headache to a similar degree. A limitation of the study is that no randomization method was mentioned specifically. Nevertheless, this is a randomized, controlled trial on relief of headache pain. In the future, it is suggested that studies approach the problem from various points of view.

11. Abstractor and date