13. Diseases of the Musculo Skeletal System and Connective Tissue

Reference

1. Objectives
To evaluate the efficacy of moxa-pellet therapy for chronic lower back pain.

2. Design
Randomized controlled trial (RCT).

3. Setting
One Oriental hospital (Kyunghlee University Medical Center), Republic of Korea.

4. Participants
Patients with chronic lower back pain for more than 3 months (n=61).

5. Intervention
Arm 1: Moxa-pellet.
Arm 2: Sham moxa-pellet.
Arm 3: Adhesive sheet only.
Among 61 subjects enrolled, 21 subjects dropped out of the study.

6. Main outcome measures
Pain assessed on a visual analogue scale (VAS), Short Form McGill Pain Questionnaire (SF-MPQ) score, 36-Item Short Form Health Survey (SF-36) score.

7. Main results
Treatment significantly decreased pain VAS score in Arm 1 and Arm 2 but not in Arm 3. However, treatment significantly decreased SF-MPQ score only in Arm 1, but not Arm 2 and Arm 3. Treatment also resulted in significantly improved scores for Physical Function (PF), Role-Emotional (RE), Mental Health (MH), and Bodily Pain (BP) in Arm 1, and for BP only in Arm 3, but not for all subscales in Arm 2. The only significant among-group difference was in physical function (PF) (P =0.03).

8. Conclusions
The moxa-pellet treatment relieves pain and improves quality of life in patients with chronic lower back pain.

9. Safety assessment in the article
Not mentioned.

10. Abstractor’s comments
The moxa-pellet is not a traditional treatment in Oriental medicine clinics, but acupuncture point stimulation and delivering active ingredients are common treatment options. The randomization and grouping of subjects in this study were well described. If the success of single-blinding was assessed after treatment, the quality of this study was raised. However, the reasons for withdrawal should be stated and it should be noted that quality of life cannot be easily improved within 4 weeks of treatment.

11. Abstractor and date
Kim HJ, 17 August 2010.