13. Diseases of the Musculo Skeletal System and Connective Tissue

Reference

1. Objectives
To compare the efficacies of sweet bee venom acupuncture and bee venom acupuncture for chronic lower back pain.

2. Design
Double-blinded randomized controlled trial (DB-RCT).

3. Setting
One Oriental hospital (Oriental Medicine Hospital of Dongeui University), Republic of Korea.

4. Participants
Patients with lower back pain lasting more than 3 months (n=39).

5. Intervention
Arm 1: Sweet bee venom (SBV) acupuncture + dry needle acupuncture (n=20).
Arm 2: Bee venom (BV) acupuncture + dry needle acupuncture (n=19).

6. Main outcome measures
Pain rated on a visual analogue scale (VAS), Oswestry Disability Index (ODI), itching rated on a VAS.

7. Main results
Treatment decreased pain (pain VAS score) and improved physical functioning (decreased ODI score) in both groups, but the decrease and improvement were significantly greater in Arm 1 than in Arm 1. The severity of itching increased with number of treatments in Arm 2, but not in Arm 1. There was a significant between-group difference in itching severity.

8. Conclusions
SBV acupuncture causes less severe allergic skin reactions such as itching, but its efficacy is lower than that of BV acupuncture.

9. Safety assessment in the article
Itching was the only adverse event mentioned.

10. Abstractor’s comments
The effectiveness of BV acupuncture is well known, but its adverse effects have not been well studied. In this study, both the effectiveness of BV acupuncture was demonstrated and the adverse events of BV acupuncture and SBV acupuncture were compared. Since SBV reduces pain and is associated with less severe adverse events, it should be considered the method of choice.

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