Abstracts and Commentaries on Key Articles in the Literature

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Is tapping on acupuncture points an active ingredient in emotional freedom techniques? A systematic review and meta-analysis of comparative studies.

Church D, Stapleton P, Yang A, Gallo F. J Nerv Ment Dis. 2018; 206(10):783–793.

Emotional freedom techniques (EFTs) combine elements of cognitive restructuring and exposure techniques with acupoint stimulation. Meta-analyses indicate large effect sizes of treatments in post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety; however, treatment effects might be due to components that EFT shares with other therapies. This analysis was conducted to review if EFT’s acupressure component was an active ingredient. The researchers compared 6 studies of adults with diagnosed or self-identified psychologic or physical symptoms (n = 403), and three relevant studies (n = 102) were identified. Pretest versus post-test EFT treatment showed a large effect size, with Cohen’s d = 1.28 (95% confidence interval [CI], 0.56 to 2.00) and Hedges’ g = 1.25 (95% CI, 0.54 to 1.96). Acupressure groups in these studies had moderately stronger outcomes than controls, with weighted post-treatment effect sizes of d = -0.47 (95% CI, -0.94 to 0.0) and g = -0.45 (95% CI, -0.91 to 0.0). The meta-analysis indicated that the acupressure component was an active ingredient and outcomes were not due solely to placebo, nonspecific effects of any therapy, or nonacupressure components.

A collaborative model of integrative care: synergy between Anthroposophic music therapy, acupuncture, and spiritual care in two patients with breast cancer.

Ben-Arye E, Preis L, Barak Y, Samuels N. Complement Ther Med. 2018; 40:195–197.

Complementary/integrative medicine (CIM) has been shown to play an important role in supportive cancer care, relieving symptoms and improving quality of life among patients with cancer. Communication between CIM practitioners and oncology healthcare professionals has been researched in depth, while little attention has been paid to the interactions among CIM practitioners from different disciplines who work together in integrative oncology settings. The researchers explored the interaction between an Anthroposophic music therapist and a spiritual care provider who co-treated 2 female patients with breast cancer undergoing chemotherapy. The joint CIM treatments took place in an integrative oncology service in northern Israel. The collaboration between the 2 practitioners resulted in a synergistic therapeutic process, promoting the patients’ well-being and facilitating their spiritual growth. The authors concluded that there is a need to explore further the therapeutic interactions among CIM therapists from different disciplines who often work together in integrative oncology settings. Collaboration among different CIM disciplines can lead to synergy which goes beyond the additive effects of the individual therapies.

Acupuncture for irritable bowel syndrome: study protocol for a multicenter randomized controlled trial.

Pei LX, Geng H, Chen H, et al. Trials. 2018;19(1):529.

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a chronic gastrointestinal disorder characterized by abdominal pain and change of bowel habits without organic disease. A global perspective given by the World Gastroenterology Organization noted that IBS can have an impact on the quality of an individual’s daily life, cause socioeconomic problems, and potentially impair patient–physician relationships. It is problematic to treat IBS due to its complicated pathophysiology. Acupuncture is an alternative therapy recommended for IBS.

The aim of this study is to investigate the efficacy and safety of acupuncture therapy for patients with IBS. The researchers also want to explore the correlation between IBS-gene subtypes and acupuncture effects. A multicenter
randomized controlled trial will be performed in seven hospitals. Six hundred participants will be stratified into 2 strata (IBS-C or IBS-D). Then, patients within each stratum will be divided into an experimental group and a control group randomly. The experimental group will be treated with acupuncture while the control group will be treated with Western medicine. All the patients will receive 6 weeks treatment and have a 3-month follow-up.

The primary outcome will be the IBS-Symptom Severity Score, and the secondary outcome will be the IBS-Quality of Life score. Any correlation between IBS-gene subtypes and acupuncture effects detected will be based on polymerase chain reaction–restriction fragment length polymorphisms. Outcome measures (including primary and secondary outcome measures) will be checked at baseline, 1 week, 2 weeks, 4 weeks, and 6 weeks of the intervention, and at 12 weeks after the intervention.

This will be a multicenter randomized controlled trial for IBS in China. It might clarify the efficacy of acupuncture as an alternative therapy for IBS. This will be the first time ever that the potential mechanism of IBS based on genomics will have been investigated.

**Acupuncture for symptoms in menopause transition: a randomized controlled trial.**

Liu Z, Ai Y, Wang W, et al. *Am J Obstet Gynecol*. 2018;219(4):373.e1–373.e10.

**Comparison of 3 assessment modes of acupuncture effect on patients with chronic prostatitis/chronic pelvic pain syndrome: a study protocol for a randomized controlled trial.**

Zhou J, Liu Y, Li C, Liu Z. *Medicine (Baltimore)*. 2018;97(42):e12887.
company of the outcome assessors. Mode 2 will be the scale recorded on the same day but not at the hospital. Mode 3 will be the scale recorded at the hospital 1–3 days after the last acupuncture session. The three key secondary outcomes include will be the three modes of assessment of changes from baseline in the NIH-CPSI total scores in the verum acupuncture group at week 4 after treatment. Analysis will be according to intention-to-treat, and multiplicity will be controlled for with a step-down closed-testing procedure.

To the researchers’ knowledge, previous studies did not include the details of assessment scales when determining the efficacy of acupuncture in patients with CP/CPPS. Furthermore, it was not clear which modes were used to assess the effects. The answers provided by the proposed study could improve the reproducibility of acupuncture research and the reliability of its results.

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