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Acupuncture for acute non-specific low back pain: a randomised, controlled, double-blind, placebo trial.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:

To assess the efficacy of Yamamoto's acupuncture method on pain, drug intake, functional capacity and quality of life for the treatment of acute non-specific low back pain (ANLBP).

METHODS:

A prospective, randomised, parallel-group, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial was performed in 80 men and women with ANLBP who were randomly assigned to five acupuncture sessions (intervention group (IG), n=40) and to five non-penetrating acupuncture sessions (sham group (SG), n=40). Patients were evaluated at baseline and at 3, 7, 14, 21 and 28 days. The measurements used were: visual analogue scale (VAS) for cumulative pain (before intervention, VAS1) and immediate pain (after intervention, VAS2); function (Roland-Morris Disability Questionnaire (RM)); quality of life (SF-36); improvement rating; and number of anti-inflammatory tablets taken. The primary endpoint was a decrease of at least 2 cm in VAS1.

RESULTS:

Pain VAS improved significantly in the IG from day 14 onwards compared with the SG, but the difference did not reach the prespecified clinically relevant value of 2 cm. The IG was significantly superior to the SG in the following outcomes: cumulative pain, function, pain (SF-36) and vitality (SF-36) at days 14, 21 and 28 ($p<0.05$); limitation in physical aspects (SF-36) at all times ($p=0.007$ and $p=0.02$); and functional capacity (SF-36) at days 21 and 28 ($p<0.05$). The IG also took significantly fewer anti-inflammatory tablets than the SG ($p=0.004$) at all evaluation times and the improvement rating was better than the SG ($p<0.001$).

CONCLUSIONS:

Yamamoto's new scalp acupuncture was more effective than sham treatment with regard to decrease in pain and anti-inflammatory intake as well as improving functional status and quality of life for patients with ANLBP.

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