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Acupuncture for chronic Achilles tendnopathy: a randomized controlled study.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:

To examine whether acupuncture treatment would improve outcome in chronic Achilles tendinopathy.

METHODS:

A randomized, controlled trial at two centers of 64 randomized patients aged 18 to 70 years with chronic Achilles tendinopathy was conducted from July 2007 to April 2010, with follow-up until October, 2010. These patients were randomly allocated into an acupuncture treatment group (acupuncture group) and an eccentric exercises group (control group). The validated Victorian Institute of Sports Assessment-Achilles (VISA-A) questionnaire was completed at baseline and 8, 16, and 24 weeks. The pain at rest and after activity was accessed at baseline and 8 weeks with Visual Analogue Scale (VAS).

RESULTS:

After randomization into the acupuncture group or control group, one patient was loss of follow-up. The mean VISA-A score improved signifificantly after 8 weeks in the acupuncture group to 67.1 points [95% confifidence interval (CI), 64.1-70.2] and in the control group to 48.5 points (95% CI, 45.5-51.6) with an additional 18.6 points increase in acupuncture treatment patients (P=0.0000). Acupuncture treatment resulted in a significant increase from baseline in VISA-A of 25.8 after 16 weeks and 28.4 after 24 weeks. Whereas, in the control group the increase from baseline in VISA-A were 10.0 and 16.6 after 16 and 24 weeks, respectively (P=0.0000). The VAS diminished by 2.0 cm after activity, and by 1.5 cm at rest after 8 weeks in the control group. In the acupuncture group, the pain scores diminished significantly more than in the control group, with pain reduction of 3.7 cm after activity (P=0.0000) and 3.2 cm at rest (P =0.0000).

CONCLUSION:

Acupuncture intervention could improve pain and activity in patients with chronic Achilles tendinopathy compared with eccentric exercises.

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