

Auricular acupuncture effectively reduces state anxiety before dental treatment-a randomised controlled trial.

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Source

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES:

The objective of this study was to analyse whether auricular acupuncture, acupuncture at the outer ear, could reduce state anxiety before dental treatment.

METHODS:

This prospective, randomised patient-blinded study with 182 patients compared anxiety before dental treatment following auricular acupuncture at the relaxation-, tranquilizer- and master cerebral points (auricular acupuncture group) versus acupuncture at sham points (finger-, shoulder- and tonsil points; sham group) and a non-intervention control group. Anxiety was assessed using the Spielberger State Trait Anxiety Inventory (German version) before auricular acupuncture and 20 min thereafter, immediately before dental treatment.

RESULTS:

Auricular acupuncture reduced state anxiety score more effectively from 54.7 ± 10.8 to 46.9 ± 10.4 (mean \pm SD) than sham acupuncture from 51.9 ± 10.2 to 48.4 ± 10.0 . In contrast, state anxiety in the control group increased from 51.0 ± 11.7 to 54.0 ± 11.6 (mean increase $+3.0$; CI $+4.7$ to $+1.2$). The decrease in state anxiety in both intervention groups was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) when compared to the non-intervention control group. After correcting for group differences in baseline state anxiety, the reduction in anxiety was -7.3 score points (CI -9.0 to -5.6) in the auricular acupuncture group and -3.7 score points (CI -5.4 to -1.9) in the sham group ($p = 0.008$).

CONCLUSION:

Auricular acupuncture, a minimally invasive method, effectively reduces state anxiety before dental treatment.

CLINICAL RELEVANCE:

Auricular acupuncture could be an option for patients scheduled for dental treatment, who experience an uncomfortable degree of anxiety and request an acute intervention for their anxiety.

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