

Acceptability of an acupuncture intervention for geriatric chronic pain: an open pilot study.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:

This study investigated the acceptability and effectiveness of acupuncture for persistent musculoskeletal pain in the elderly and assessed the conditions for a future controlled trial.

METHODS:

A total of 60 patients, hospitalized in a geriatric hospital were enrolled. The intervention consisted of eight acupuncture sessions. The main outcome was the patient's participation rate. Regarding pain, the evaluation was based on pre- and post-treatment variations. As a high proportion of the patients had cognitive impairment, the behavioral pain scale DOLOPLUS-2 was chosen although self evaluation was used wherever possible.

RESULTS:

The mean age of the patients was 83 years. The acceptance rate was very high (89.6%) and 90% of the patients completed the entire course of treatment. After five weeks, the mean DOLOPLUS score had decreased significantly ($P < 0.01$). The patients reported improved sleep quality and a reduction in their anxiety symptoms. Furthermore, caregivers noticed a decrease in patient aggressiveness making care easier.

CONCLUSION:

Our results suggest that acupuncture is highly acceptable and could be very useful in the management of chronic pain when performed in very old frail people with chronic physical and mental disability. TRIAL REGISTRATION IDENTIFIER: NCT01043692 ClinicalTrials.gov.

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