

ACUPUNCTURE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF OVERACTIVE BLADDER SYNDROME

Hypothesis / aims of study

Acupuncture is a commonly used treatment modality in Traditional Chinese Medicine, but it is not as widely used in Western Medicine. Although the precise mechanism of action is unknown, previous studies (1, 2) have demonstrated acupuncture to be beneficial for the treatment of patients with symptoms of overactive bladder syndrome (OAB).

Conventional treatments for patients with OAB are firstly, conservative measures including behavioural modification followed by oral medications of anticholinergics or beta agonist.

However, access to formal behavioural modification training is often limited and oral medications offer symptomatic relief to approximately 60% of patients; furthermore, some patients are unable to tolerate medications due to their side effects and contraindications.

Those in whom initial management fails are offered invasive surgical treatment options.

The aim of the study is to assess if acupuncture is effective in the treatment of patients with OAB in whom conservative measures and oral medications have failed, but are unwilling or unsuitable for invasive therapies.

Study design, materials and methods

Patients with symptoms of OAB in whom conservative measures and oral medications have failed, or could not tolerate oral medication due to its side effects or contraindications and have declined invasive treatment options; were offered a course of acupuncture treatment from December 2011 to December 2013.

Each course consists of a 30 minutes session once per week for a period of ten weeks.

Three meridian acupuncture points were used bilaterally, including SP6 (spleen meridian point), CV4 (conception vessel) and K3 (kidney meridian point).

Initially we utilised traditional acupuncture, later we introduced acupuncture with electrode stimulation (electrode acupuncture) in order to give a consistent pulse.

A urology nurse practitioner provided the treatment sessions during this clinic.

All patients completed a 3-day bladder-diary, the validated International Consultation on Incontinence Modular Questionnaire-Overactive Bladder (ICIQ-OAB) and Urinary Incontinence (ICIQ-UI) Short Form questionnaires, prior to and after completion of their acupuncture treatments.

The results from the questionnaires were audited, analysed and compared.

Results

A total of 60 patients were treated with acupuncture for symptoms of OAB.

8 patients were excluded from the study as they did not complete the required questionnaires.

A total of 52 patients were included in the study. 25 males and 27 females.

Mean age 58 years old (range 23-87).

All patients had urodynamic studies, 44 patients had idiopathic detrusor overactivities and 8 with normal urodynamic findings.

Overall, the mean ICIQ-OAB pre-treatment = 35 (range 9–53); post-treatment = 23 (range 1-47)($p < 0.05$).

Mean ICIQ-UI Short Form pre-treatment = 10 (range 0–18); post-treatment = 7 (range 0–21)($p < 0.05$).

41 (79%) patients found acupuncture helpful in improving their OAB symptoms, 11 (21%) patients did not.

In those who found acupuncture helpful, the assessed parameters are summarised in the table below:

	Acupuncture helpful	
Number of patients	41	
	Pre-treatment	Post-treatment
ICIQ-OAB	36	23
ICIQ-UI Short Form	10	7

In the group of patients who did not find acupuncture helpful, there were no significant differences in the scores of the questionnaires. However, only 2 patients in this group completed their questionnaires. 9 patients did not complete the treatment or did not attend their appointments, thus the assumption was made that they did not find the treatment helpful and therefore they were included in the group of patients who did not find acupuncture helpful.

No side effects and no complications were reported.

Interpretation of results

Overall 79% of patients found acupuncture improved their OAB symptoms, by a reduction of a mean of 12 points on ICIQ-OAB questionnaire and 3 points on ICIQ-UI Short Form questionnaire.

There was significant improvement in all these parameters ($p < 0.05$) following acupuncture.

Acupuncture is well tolerated with no side effects or complications.

Concluding message

Acupuncture has been demonstrated to be an effective treatment modality for patients with symptoms of OAB and should be considered as a potential alternative to our current therapeutic regimes.

References

1. Philp T, Shah PJR, Worth PHL. Acupuncture in the treatment of bladder instability. British Journal of Urology 1988 Jun; 61(6): 490-493.

2. Emmons SL, Otto L. Acupuncture for overactive bladder: a randomised control trial. *Obstetrics and Gynaecology* 2005 Jul; 106(1); 138-143.

Disclosures

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