

Acupuncture reduces comorbid symptoms of cancer pain

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Electroacupuncture for fatigue, sleep, and psychological distress in breast cancer patients with aromatase inhibitor-related arthralgia: A randomized trial

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BACKGROUND

Although fatigue, sleep disturbance, depression, and anxiety are associated with pain in breast cancer patients, it is unknown whether acupuncture can decrease these comorbid symptoms in cancer patients with pain. The objective of this study was to evaluate the effect of electroacupuncture (EA) on fatigue, sleep, and psychological distress in breast cancer survivors who experience joint pain related to aromatase inhibitors (AIs).

METHODS

The authors performed a randomized controlled trial of an 8-week course of EA compared with a waitlist control (WLC) group and a sham acupuncture (SA) group in postmenopausal women with breast cancer who self-reported joint pain attributable to AIs. Fatigue, sleep disturbance, anxiety, and depression were measured using the Brief Fatigue Inventory (BFI), the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI), and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS). The effects of EA and SA versus WLC on these outcomes were evaluated using mixed-effects models.

RESULTS

Of the 67 randomly assigned patients, baseline pain interference was associated with fatigue (Pearson correlation coefficient [r]=0.75; $P < .001$), sleep disturbance ($r=0.38$; $P=.0026$), and depression ($r=0.58$; $P < .001$). Compared with the WLC condition, EA produced significant improvements in fatigue ($P=.0095$), anxiety ($P=.044$), and depression ($P=.015$) and a nonsignificant improvement in sleep disturbance ($P=.058$) during the 12-week intervention and follow-up period. In contrast, SA did not produce significant reductions in fatigue or anxiety symptoms but did produce a significant improvement in depression compared with the WLC condition ($P=.0088$).

CONCLUSIONS

Compared with usual care, EA produced significant improvements in fatigue, anxiety, and depression; whereas SA improved only depression in women experiencing AI-related arthralgia.
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