

Acupuncture Reduces Ankylosing Spondylitis Pain - New Study

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New research finds acupuncture effective for the treatment of a type of chronic inflammatory arthritis known as ankylosing spondylitis (AS). This disorder of the spinal vertebrae and other regions causes decreased flexibility and may deform patients into a hunched forward position. AS patients may lose the ability to raise the head upwards to a level position.

Ankylosing spondylitis commonly affects the spinal joints, pelvis, sacroiliac joints, eyes and intestines. In severe cases, AS causes fusion of the anterior aspect of the spinal vertebrae. Ligaments and tendons are also affected and tendonitis may occur. Biomedical theories suggest that ankylosing spondylitis is both genetic and related to autoimmune dysfunction.

The new research finds that acupuncture needles applied to the Governing Vessel (Du Meridian) combined with moxibustion therapy significantly reduce pain levels in ankylosing spondylitis patients. The Governing Vessel is an acupuncture channel that traverses four main regions of the body. It originates in the perineum and ascends along the spine until it reaches the neck. Next, it enters the brain and ascends to the top of the head. It then follows the midline of the forehead across the bridge of the nose and terminates at the upper lip. A second pathway originates at the pelvic region. It traverses the genitals, coccyx bone and gluteal region before returning to the spinal column. Another pathway connects with the inner canthus of the eyes before ascending across the forehead to the top of the head. This third pathway of the Governing Vessel then enters the brain and reemerges at the neck. It then descends along opposite sides of the spinal column to the waist. The fourth pathway of the Governing Vessel originates at the lower abdomen and then ascends across the navel, heart and trachea. It then encircles the mouth and terminates below the eye.

The research was highly focused and only studied patients who had both the biomedical diagnosis of ankylosing spondylitis and the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) differential diagnosis of Kidney Yang deficiency. This type of deficiency is a syndrome within the TCM system characterized by weakness and pain of the lumbar region, loosening of the teeth, hair loss, impotence, low libido, buckling of the knees, tinnitus and hearing loss. This is accompanied by general Yang deficiency

symptoms such as low energy, pallor and a general feeling of coldness throughout the body. The Governing Vessel was chosen as the focal point of the treatment strategy for its location in the spinal region and its classical indications for the treatment of spinal disorders. The researchers noted that Governing Vessel moxibustion significantly relieves ankylosing spondylitis related pain, however, the combination of acupuncture with moxibustion is markedly more effective than moxibustion as a standalone treatment modality.

References:

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