Study: Acupuncture for Acute Low Back Pain More Effective Than Drugs

Study suggests that acupuncture works effectively for pain relief, draws international attention

By Jaseng Center Staff

New research by Korean doctors of Oriental Medicine suggested that an acupuncture method could reduce acute lower back pain faster and more effectively than conventional drug injections. It is the first study of Oriental Medicine for pain relief that has received international recognition through the PAIN journal.

In a joint study conducted by doctors of Jaseng Hospital of Korean Medicine and researchers of the Korea Institute for Oriental Medicine, pain was reduced significantly more among patients who received a nontraditional acupuncture treatment called motion style acupuncture (MSAT) compared with another group who had an injection of diclofenac sodium, a drug widely used for immediate pain relief.

"Our study has shown that MSAT was more effective for pain and function in acute low back pain patients with severe disability in the short term and up to four weeks (longer) than conventional non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug injection," the report said.

The clinical trial report titled "Motion style acupuncture in acute low back pain patients with severe disability" was published in the online edition of the Journal of the International Association for the study of Pain, one of the leading organizations for pain relief and treatment.

It will be published in the July print edition as the first study of Oriental Medicine for pain relief to be featured in the U.S - based medical journal, the authors said.

"This is the first study that shows objective evidence that acupuncture works better as pain relief than drugs. We are glad to get such international attention and recognition," said Ha In-Hyuk, a doctor at Jaseng Hospital of Korean Medicine.
The study assessed the pain level on a scale of 0 to 10 as well as the functional level in activities of patients from the two groups. A group of 28 patients who received the motion style acupuncture said the pain level reduced 46 percent on average in 30 minutes while the other 28 patients who had the drug injection had their pain level drop 8.7 percent in the same amount of time. The level of physical disability of patients who were treated with the acupuncture method dropped 39 percent on average in the first 30 minutes while others said their disability merely improved.

The treatment method, developed by Jaseng Hospital, is similar to traditional acupuncture in that it places needles in specific meridian acupuncture points and uses manual stimulation of the needles. It requires a patient to exercise while having acupuncture needles inserted. MSAT differs in that it keeps that patient engaged in active or passive action of related body parts for a certain amount of time during acupuncture. Practitioners lift a patient in pain with severe disability by putting their arms around his or her waist and apply needles to acupoints - the back of a neck, elbow, hands and top of the foot. Patients are asked to walk with assistance from practitioners. In less than in 20 minutes, patients were able to walk on their own and the level of pain was reduced, the hospital said.

The pain level cited from the two groups reached a similar stage six months after the treatment. However, more patients who had the drug injection were hospitalized for intensive care for a longer period of time, it added.

Of the 28 patients in the injection group, 27 were hospitalized for nearly 18 days on average. A total of 19 patients in the acupuncture group admitted themselves to hospitals and stayed 12.5 days on average.

"The strong stimulation of distal acupuncture points in motion style acupuncture treatment may enhance the effects of pain relief by triggering 'diffuse noxious inhibitory controls' and increasing the secretion of endorphins by stimulating internal activity of the central nervous system," Shin Joon-shik, coauthor of the study, said in the paper.

Joon-Shik Shin, a Korean Eastern Medicine doctor, developed the MSAT- a non-traditional acupuncture treatment around 1990. "The technique is highly effective in reducing musculoskeletal pain and increasing limited mobility, and provides almost immediate relief in acute cases with severe pain and restricted motion," Dr. Shin said.
The motion style acupuncture technique (MSAT) is highly effective in reducing musculoskeletal pain and increasing limited mobility, and provides almost immediate relief in acute cases with severe pain and restricted motion. MSAT has been used for a wide range of applications from first-aid treatment for patients suffering from intense pain of acute musculoskeletal origin to various spinal and joint sprains, temporomandibular joint syndrome, frozen shoulder (adhesive capsulitis), gonarthritis, and intervertebral disc herniation.

The study has shown the effectiveness of MSAT for acute low back pain patients with severe disability can reduce the treatment period in the short term. According to cost-effectiveness threshold values, our new research can be associated with further health economic effects such as cost-effective treatment strategy in patient with acute low back pain.

Jaseng Hospital of Korean Eastern Medicine gave a presentation on the "Immediate effects of motion style acupuncture treatment (MSAT) in acute low back pain with severe disability: a multicenter, randomized, controlled trial" at the America Pain Society (APS)’s 31st Annual Scientific Meeting in May 2012 in Honolulu, Hawaii, and the short term effects at the World Congress on Pain hosted by the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) in August 2012 in Milan, Italy.

The distinct treatment methods of Jaseng Hospital of Korean Eastern Medicine is attracting more and more worldwide attention and admiration.

In 2009 Jaseng Center for alternative medicine, a branch clinic of Jaseng Medical Group, opened in Fullerton, Calif. and six more clinics in the U.S.

"Requests and invitations for joint research and education to learn more about and adopt Jaseng’s non-surgical disc treatment are constantly flooding in from all corners of the world. Those include leading American conventional treatment hospitals such as Beverly Hills’ Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Chicago’s Rush Univ. Medical Center," said Dr. Joon-Shik Shin, the president of Jaseng Medical Group.