Study: Electroacupuncture Helps With Depression

A recent research study out of Hong Kong shows electroacupuncture stimulation can quickly reduce the severity of depressive symptoms to help patients dealing with depression recover faster using alternative methods.

Researchers at the School of Chinese Medicine at The University of Hong Kong, Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine and the Department of Psychiatry in Kowloon Hospital conducted a study of a randomized controlled trial using dense cranial electroacupuncture stimulation (DCEAS) on patients with major depressive disorder (MDD).

DCEAS is a novel acupuncture treatment, which was developed by Dr. Zhang Zhang-jin, associate professor of the HKU School of Chinese Medicine.

In DCEAS, Zhang believes that stimulating Bai Hui and Yin Tang, as well as other acupoints including Si Shen Cong, Tou Lin Qi, Tai Yang, Shuai Gu and Tou Wei, triggers the release of serotonin (5-HT) and other chemicals in the brain more efficiently, resulting in better treatment outcomes.

For the study, 73 participants, ages 25 to 65 years, had been diagnosed with MDD and had suffered with the disorder from several months to several years.

The volunteers continued taking their prescribed antidepressant medications (fluoxetine), and were randomly selected to be in the DCEAS group or the control group. Participants in the DCEAS group received dense cranial electroacupuncture stimulation, while the control group received noninvasive electroacupuncture (placebo acupuncture) for 9 sessions in 3 weeks. Each session lasted 45 minutes.

Assessments given by both physicians and the patients themselves revealed that the DCEAS group had greater improvement in depressive symptoms, according to researchers.

On the 21st day after receiving treatment, the DCEAS group had a greater improvement in both the clinical depression assessment and the self-rating depression scale. Furthermore, strong improvements were observed in the DCEAS patients as early as at day 3, and this continued until the end of the treatment.
The findings suggest that DCEAS may be considered as an additional treatment for depressed individuals to achieve better clinical effects.