

Standardized set-point acupuncture for migraines.

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Abstract

CONTEXT:

Migraine headaches are common, debilitating, underdiagnosed, and undertreated, and medications are not always effective. Research has shown that acupuncture may be an effective and safe adjuvant or alternative migraine treatment.

OBJECTIVE:

The purpose of the current study was to evaluate whether a standardized set of acupuncture points, when used to deliver treatment over a predefined period of time, could reduce the frequency and intensity of migraines.

DESIGN:

This is a prospective interventional study using set point acupuncture for migraines.

SETTING:

The study took place at Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center in Johnstown, PA, USA.

PARTICIPANTS:

Participants were 59 individuals with a diagnosis of migraine.

INTERVENTION:

Acupuncture was administered 2 ×/wk for 4 wks, followed by 1 ×/wk for 4 more wks, using one set of acupoints.

OUTCOME MEASURES:

Participants collected daily headache diaries and migraine quality-of-life measurements on a personal digital assistant for 12 wks before starting the acupuncture intervention. Participants continued to record the frequency and intensity of their migraines during the intervention and for an additional 12 wks beyond the intervention. The Migraine Disability Assessment (MIDAS), Headache Impact Test (HIT-6), and Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) were completed 4 × during the study: 12 wks prior to the start of the intervention, immediately prior to the first acupuncture treatment, at the end of treatment, and 12 wks after the end of treatment.

RESULTS:

When preintervention measurements were compared to postintervention measurements, migraine frequency and pain intensity showed a significant decrease ($\alpha = 0.05$) after acupuncture intervention. Results had not returned to the preintervention baseline even 12 wks after the last acupuncture session. Acupuncture significantly influenced migraine frequency and intensity in the study's participants when preintervention measurements were compared to postintervention measurements.

CONCLUSIONS:

These results indicate that not only did acupuncture decrease both the frequency and intensity of migraines, but also the benefit had not subsided for 12 wks after the final acupuncture session. Validated survey measurements used to assess migraine impact on quality of life showed statistically significant improvement over baseline.

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