Treating attention deficit hyperactivity disorder with acupuncture: A randomized controlled trial

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Abstract

Introduction
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is the most common childhood behavioral problem. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of acupuncture in patients with ADHD.

Methods
The study is randomized, waitlist-controlled, unblinded. A total of 93 participants with ADHD were enrolled. The acupuncture group received acupuncture treatment twice per week for 6 weeks. The waitlist group did not receive acupuncture during the first six weeks, and then underwent acupuncture treatment during the next six weeks. The primary outcome measure was the ADHD-rating scale. The computerized neurocognitive function tests (CNTs) was conducted as an objective measurement.

Results
The results of the primary analyses are equivocal. Additional analyses were conducted after data were stratified according to ADHD medication. The acupuncture group not taking ADHD medications demonstrated significantly better performance in the CNTs compared to the waitlist group: the backward digit span test (p = 0.026), backward visual span test (p = 0.044), correct hit/omission error of auditory continuous performance test (CPT) (p = 0.021), standard deviation of response time of visual CPT (p = 0.048). The clinical global impression-severity score decreased significantly in the acupuncture group after treatment compared to that in the waitlist group (p = 0.000). There was no statistically significant difference between both groups taking ADHD medications, except for verbal learning test in which waitlist group experienced a higher increase than acupuncture group. No adverse effect was reported.

Conclusions
Acupuncture positively influences cognitive function in patients who are not on ADHD medication.