Efficacy and safety of acupuncture in children: an overview of systematic reviews.

Yang C, Hao Z, Zhang LL, Guo Q.


Abstract

In recent years, acupuncture has increasingly being integrated into pediatric health care. It was used on ~150,000 children (0.2%). We aim to update the evidence for the efficacy and safety of acupuncture for children and evaluate the methodological qualities of these studies to improve future research in this area. We included 24 systematic reviews, comprising 142 randomized controlled trials (RCTs) with 12,787 participants. Only 25% (6/24) reviews were considered to be high quality (10.00 ± 0.63). High-quality systematic reviews and Cochrane systematic reviews tend to yield neutral or negative results (P = 0.052, 0.009 respectively). The efficacy of acupuncture for five diseases (Cerebral Palsy (CP), nocturnal enuresis, tic disorders, amblyopia, and pain reduction) is promising. It was unclear for hypoxic ischemic encephalopathy, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, mumps, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), asthma, nausea/vomiting, and myopia. Acupuncture is not effective for epilepsy. Only six reviews reported adverse events (AEs) and no fatal side effects were reported. The efficacy of acupuncture for some diseases is promising and there have been no fatal side effects reported. Further high-quality studies are justified, with five diseases in particular as research priorities.