

Improvement in fibromyalgia symptoms with acupuncture: results of a randomized controlled trial.

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OBJECTIVE: To test the hypothesis that acupuncture improves symptoms of fibromyalgia.

PATIENTS AND METHODS: We conducted a prospective, partially blinded, controlled, randomized clinical trial of patients receiving true acupuncture compared with a control group of patients who received simulated acupuncture. All patients met American College of Rheumatology criteria for fibromyalgia and had tried conservative symptomatic treatments other than acupuncture. We measured symptoms with the Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire (FIQ) and the Multidimensional Pain Inventory at baseline, immediately after treatment, and at 1 month and 7 months after treatment. The trial was conducted from May 28, 2002, to August 18, 2003.

RESULTS: Fifty patients participated in the study: 25 in the acupuncture group and 25 in the control group. Total fibromyalgia symptoms, as measured by the FIQ, were significantly improved in the acupuncture group compared with the control group during the study period ($P = .01$). The largest difference in mean FIQ total scores was observed at 1 month (42.2 vs 34.8 in the control and acupuncture groups, respectively; $P = .007$). Fatigue and anxiety were the most significantly improved symptoms during the follow-up period. However, activity and physical function levels did not change. Acupuncture was well tolerated, with minimal adverse effects.

CONCLUSION: This study paradigm allows for controlled and blinded clinical trials of acupuncture. We found that acupuncture significantly improved symptoms of fibromyalgia. Symptomatic improvement was not restricted to pain relief and was most significant for fatigue and anxiety.