

Preventive and Curative Effects of Acupuncture and Moxibustion on the Common Cold: -a Multicenter Randomized Controlled Trial in Japan-

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Objective: Examination the preventive and curative effects of manual acupuncture on the symptoms of the common cold.

Methods: Students and staff in five Japanese acupuncture schools (n = 326) were randomly allocated to acupuncture and no-treatment control groups. A specific needling point (Y point) at the throat was used. Gentle manipulation of thin acupuncture, which evoked de-qi sensation, was applied bilaterally for 15 s. Acupuncture treatments were performed four times during a two week experimental period with a 2 week follow-up period. Daily scoring of a common cold diary (CCD) for 4 weeks, and a common cold questionnaire (CCQ) was scored before acupuncture treatments and twice at weekly intervals. A reliability test was done on the final day of entry to the questionnaire.

Results: Dropout rate was 5 of the 326 subjects who were recruited. The CCD score in the acupuncture group tended to decrease after treatment, but the difference was not significant (Cox regression analysis, $P > 0.05$). Statistically significant less symptoms were reported in the CCQ by the acupuncture group than control group ($P = 0.024$, GLM: general linear model). Significant inter-center ($P < 0.001$, GLM) and sex differences ($P = 0.027$, GLM) were also detected.

Conclusion: This is the first report of a multi-center randomized controlled trial of acupuncture for symptoms of the common cold. Although the CCD data showed no significant difference between the groups, a significant positive effect of acupuncture was demonstrated in the CCQ. The use of acupuncture for common cold symptoms should be noted and larger RCTs performed to establish stronger evidence.