

CASE REPORT

Acupuncture Method in the Treatment of Idiopathic Abdominal Pain

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Abstract

Acupuncture is an ancient treatment method with a history of three thousand. In this study, we performed acupuncture treatment for a 49-year-old patient with no additional disease and an unknown cause of abdominal pain. We applied 12 sessions of body acupuncture in total. After the end of the treatment, we called for 1 and 3 month controls. After twelve sessions, a significant improvement was achieved in the patient's clinic. We observed that his well-being continued in his controls. We think that it should be among the treatment options in acupuncture in the treatment of idiopathic abdominal pain.

Keywords: Acupuncture, Pain, Abdominal Pain

INTRODUCTION

Acupuncture consists of two Latin words (acus: needle and puncture: to needle). Traditional Chinese Acupuncture has a 3000-year history¹. Various points on ear, head and body were determined and it was thought that each point was lined up on imaginary lines named meridians². Acupuncture points have low electrical resistance. 12 pairs and 2 single meridians were defined by combining the acupuncture points. Acupuncture is applied by inserting steel, silver and gold needles are inserted into acupuncture points³. During the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), the principles of both theoretical and practical applications of Chinese medicine were determined. During this period, Ying and Yang, five elements, channel theories and various needling methods were explained⁴. The World Health Organization published a book on acupuncture as a result of examination of clinical studies in 2003. The

indications for acupuncture treatment are also specified in this report. Some of the diseases, symptoms and conditions that can be effectively treated with acupuncture were defined as: dysmenorrhoea, peptic ulcer, acute and chronic gastritis, gastrospasm pains, facial pain, migraine and other headaches, knee pain, low back pain, morning fatigue, neck pain, dental related pain, shoulder joint pain, postoperative pain, rheumatoid arthritis, tennis elbow^{5, 6}. In our study, we applied acupuncture treatment for abdominal pain whose cause was not found.

CASE

A 49-year-old married, healthcare worker (audiometrist), female patient. There is no known history of additional illness. There is no continuous medication. She did not have any surgery. There is an abdominal pain that has been going on for six



months, comes in attacks on average 4 times a week. Her pain does not respond significantly to analgesic drugs and can last for an average of 4-6 hours. No pathology was found in examinations, tests and imaging methods performed by general surgery, gastroenterology and gynecologists. When she applied to our clinic, we planned 12 sessions of acupuncture treatment as twice a week for the first 4 weeks, then once a week for the next 4 weeks. Informed consent was obtained from the patient and treatment was initiated. We chose Yintang, Du20, St36, St25, Li4, Li11, Ren 12, Ren 6, Sp 6, Liv3 as acupuncture points. Session duration time was 20 minutes on average and we preferred sterile needles of 0.25*25 mm as acupuncture needle. After 12 sessions, it was determined that the pain of patient was an average of once on every ten days, was less than before and resolved with analgesic drugs containing paracetamol. It was stated that the pain did not start in one month and three months controls.

DISCUSSION

Versatile researches on acupuncture began in China after the cultural revolution in 1965. Today, acupuncture training is provided within the Medical Faculties in many western countries, especially France, Germany, England and Austria. Among these, Acupuncture Institute within the Vienna Medical Faculty, founded by prof.dr Johannes Bischof, is the best known⁷. It demonstrated that autonomic dimension of acupuncture stimulation is generated by a mesencephalic and brain network, in which areas hypothalamus, medulla oblongata, ventrolateral peri-aqueductal gray and dorso-medial pre frontal cortex are involved. All these areas require autonomic regulation⁸. When the acupuncture needle is inserted into body, the impulses initiating from the nociceptors activates the analgesic system by stimulating the enkephalinergic and serotonergic neurons in the mesencephalon on the way from medullaspinalis to cortex. At the end of this, beta-endorphin, enkephalin, serotonin and norepinephrine increase in central nervous system and plasma, analgesic, anti-inflammatory and

immunomodulatory effects occur. Enkephalins have antidepressant, anxiolytic and anticonvulsive effects on bulbous, pons and medullaspinalis. Beta endorphin has analgesic and anti-inflammatory activity. Serotonin is effective on appetite, libido, body biorhythm, and the psychomotor system, and also has an analgesic effect⁹. Wu and colleagues evaluated the effect of acupuncture in treating visceral hyperalgesia in an animal model and with electroacupuncture (EA), visceral hyperalgesia was attenuated by downregulation of central serotonergic activities in the brain-gut axis¹⁰. Modulation of the dorsal column medial lemniscus pathway and partly the regulation of visceral functions is regulated with stimulation of Zusanli (ST 36) point, this is the acupuncture effect. This mechanism is the main known pathway of dorsal column path activation¹¹. Stimulation of ST 36 and LIV3 points with acupuncture contributes to the relief of abdominal pain by downregulating the levels of substance P, vasoactive intestinal peptide and somatostatin¹². 5-hydroxytryptamine (5-HT) concentrations, 5-HT₃ receptor (5-HT₃R) and 5-HT₄ receptor (5-HT₄R) in colon tissue were quantitatively analyzed by enzyme-linked immunosorbent method with stimulation of ST 25 point. However, it did not have an effect on the 5-HT₃R concentration¹³. In another study, while the electroacupuncture stimulation of ST 25 effectively reduce gastric motility in the abdomen, stimulation of LI 11 with electroacupuncture had a stimulating effect on gastric movement. When it is applied in form of pairs; ST25 shows suppression on gastric motility, li11 promotes gastric activity. This suggests the specificity of the stimulation effect of different acupuncture points. In our study, we chose Yintang, Du20, St36, St25, Li4, Li11, Ren 12, Ren 6, Sp 6, Liv3 as acupuncture points. We thought that by stimulation of acupuncture points, neuroactive components in local and systemic nerves and skin, muscle, connective tissues, brain and internal organs were regulated by stimulation and helped the treatment. The use of acupuncture for pain relief is increasingly common. Awareness in society and physicians is not yet at a sufficient level. Acupuncture has few side effects and low



cost. The positive results seen in literature reviews, personal experiences and feedback show that the use of acupuncture in the treatment of pain is effective. The number of randomized controlled studies is few. It is observed that the studies conducted do not have enough features such as

multi-centered and large number of patients and long follow-up period. There is a need for scientific studies using internationally valid evaluation criteria and have these features. Acupuncture can be safely used alone or as a combined treatment method in pain management.

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