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Acupuncture combined with a walking advice program improved physical activity, walking ability and low back pain level in the elderly: Three case studies

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Background: Physical activity (PA) can prevent lifestyle-related diseases and retain optimal function in activities of daily living. However, PA naturally decreases with age and is affected not only by the specific lifestyle of elderly people, but also by pain and functional disability often found in chronic low back pain patients (CLBP). Providing a support system to maintain PA is important for elderly people with CLBP.

Aim: The aim of this study is to evaluate the effect of acupuncture; as a means of pain relief, combined with a walking advice program based on the levels of PA, walking ability and low back pain in elderly women with CLBP.

Methods: The subjects were three elderly women (ages 65, 68 and 72), presented with CLBP. Subjects received acupuncture combined with a walking advice program for eight weeks, once per week. Acupuncture was applied to tender points at the lower lumbar area of the subjects. The acupuncturist used four needles, also attached to an electrical stimulator and stimulated subjects with a frequency of 1Hz per 15 min. In addition, the subjects were given walking advice. The outcome measurements were the PA (assessed by the number of daily steps and the total energy consumption), walking and degree of low back pain.

Results: The increase in the mean of daily steps per week (from 7436 steps/day to 10124 steps/day) and the daily energy consumption (from 155 kcal/day - 209 kcal/day) was noted after the program. The mean TUG time improved from 6.40 seconds to 5.64 seconds. The mean RDQ score improved from 7.0 points to 2.3 points.

Discussion & Conclusion: In older people with CLBP, acupuncture combined with a walking advice program may improve daily PA, walking ability and low back pain levels.

Biography

Mikako Tsunematsu is an Acupuncturist and has completed her PhD at Tsukuba University in Japan. She is an Assistant Professor of the Department of Acupuncture and Moxibustion, Faculty of Human Care, at Teikyo Heisei University, Japan.

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