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Chinese acupuncture combined with antidepressant for depression patients: A pragmatic randomized controlled trial

Objective: To assess the effectiveness of acupuncture combined with selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) for patients with depression in hospital using a pragmatic randomised controlled trial.

Methods: 76 patients with depression were randomly divided into two groups with randomisation ratio, 2:1 for treatment and control groups (CGs), respectively and 71 patients completed the study. 45 patients in the treatment group (TG) underwent acupuncture and received an SSRI and 26 patients in the CG received an SSRI only. The 17-item Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS-17) was used to quantitatively assess patients after 1, 2, 4 and 6 weeks of treatment.

Results: The mean (SD) baseline total HDRS scores were 22.2 (0.60) and 22.1 (0.33) in the TG and CG, respectively. After the first week of treatment the HDRS score for the TG was reduced to 15.6 (0.81), significantly different from the score of 18.3 (0.55) for the CG, $p < 0.05$. This significant difference was maintained to the end of the 6-week treatment period, when HDRS scores had fallen to 6.3 (0.49) and 8.2 (0.35) for the TG and CG, respectively.

Conclusions: Acupuncture combined with an SSRI showed a statistically significant benefit for patients with depression in hospital over the 6-week period compared with SSRIs alone. This reduction in symptoms started in the first week and continued throughout the 6 weeks of treatment.

Biography

Tian-Jun Wang graduated from Nanjing University of Chinese Medicine (NJUCM) in 1989. He completed his PhD at NJUCM, studying and researching Acupuncture in the treatment for depression. He joined the University of East London, UK as a Senior Lecturer and the Director of Acupuncture in 2007 until Dec 2014. He was the Acupuncture Course Director and Senior Lecturer at College of Naturopathic Medicine (CNM). Currently, he is the Master's and PhD Course Director and Professor at Shulan College of Chinese Medicine. He is a Visiting Professor of NJUCM. He owns his TJ Acupuncture Clinic in London, UK. He has published 20 papers in reputed journals.

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