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Acupuncture as an Adjunct Therapy in the Treatment of Depression

Doctor of Philosophy

2014

Certificate of Original Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student:

Date:

Acknowledgement

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE: The main analysis in this study assessed the effectiveness of using acupuncture as an adjunct therapy to Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibiting (SSRI's) antidepressants in the treatment of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD). A secondary analysis explored if the intervention led to any differences between subjects based on sex.

DESIGN: This study used a randomised, single blind, repeated measures design. A standardised acupuncture intervention was administered as an adjunct therapy to SSRI. The researchers proposed a best-fit synthesis model which upheld the integrity of the scientific method whilst maintaining the integrity of the Chinese Medicine (CM) model. Inclusion in the study required subjects to both satisfy the criteria for MDD and to present with liver qi stagnation (a CM diagnostic category). The Beck Depression Inventory and the Hamilton Rating Scale for Depressive Illness were the primary measures of depression.

RESULTS: The outcomes of the study showed that those who received the acupuncture intervention experienced a statistically significant improvement in their depression scores compared to those who participated in a wait list control group who experienced no change. Analysis based on diagnostic status (DSM-IV-TR) indicated an 87.3% remission rate. An eight week follow up analysis indicated subjects were able to maintain their improvement and remain significantly less depressed than they were before receiving the intervention. The data were stratified according to sex and suggested there were few differences between females and males. Further analysis was conducted to include an anxiety scale (STAI) and a general mental health scale (SCL-90). As with the depression analysis, the subjects showed statistically significant improvement in anxiety and mental health dimension scores. This was similarly true for the female and the male subjects alike.

CONCLUSION: Acupuncture may be an effective adjunct therapy to SSRIs for both females and males in treatment of MDD. In addition to this, the outcomes from this study have interesting implications within the wider context of the CM model. It would appear that in addition to the link between liver qi stagnation and depression, there is also a link to a broader spectrum of mental health dimensions.