

Randomized Controlled Trial of Acupuncture Versus Sham Acupuncture in Autism Spectrum Disorder

Virginia Chun-Nei Wong and Jie-Guang Sun. The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine. May 2010, 16(5): 545-553.
doi:10.1089/acm.2007.0768.

Objective: We aim to study the efficacy of acupuncture versus sham acupuncture in children with autism spectrum disorder.

Methods: A single-blind randomized control trial was conducted in 50 children. These children were randomly assigned to the treatment group with tongue acupuncture (40 sessions over 8 weeks) or the control group (sham tongue acupuncture to nonacupoints in the tongue).

Results: There was improvement in both the treatment and control groups in all assessed measures but more so in the treatment than in the control group: (1) eye-hand coordination, performance, and practical reasoning of Griffiths Mental Developmental Scale; (2) sensory-motor, social, affectual, language, and total score of Ritvo-Freeman Real Life Scale; (3) Comprehension Language age in the Reynell Language Developmental Scale; and (4) Total Score and Mental Age in Symbolic Play Test. The only statistically significant improvement in the treatment as compared to the control group was seen in self-care and cognition domains of the Functional Independence Measure for children.

Conclusions: We had demonstrated that a short course of acupuncture had efficacy in improving various developmental and behavioral aspects of children with autism. The long-term efficacy in functional gain needs to be further explored.