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The effectiveness of acupressure on relieving pain: a systematic review.

Chen YW¹, Wang HH².

Abstract

Acupressure is a complementary treatment that uses fingers and hands to stimulate acupoints and maintains the balance of energy. The objective of this study was to review the application of acupressure in managing different pains and the effectiveness of acupressure on relieving pain in various settings. A systematic review of English articles using the databases of MEDLINE, PubMed, and Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) was performed using the search terms of "acupressure" and "pain." Studies during which acupressure was applied as an intervention and assessed for its effectiveness on relieving pain were selected. The studies selected were those published from January 1, 1996 to December 31, 2011 that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The participants included patients with dysmenorrhea, labor pain, low back pain, chronic headache, and other traumatic pains. The Oxford 2011 Levels of Evidence was used to appraise the literature. Fifteen studies were extracted for reducing dysmenorrhea (menstrual distress), labor pain, low back pain, chronic headache, and other traumatic pain. These papers were further reviewed for their study design, adequacy of randomization and concealment of allocation, blinding of participants, interventions, and outcome measurements. Acupressure has been shown to be effective for relieving a variety of pains in different populations. The review begins to establish a credible evidence base for the use of acupressure in pain relief. The implication for health care providers would be incorporating acupressure into their practice as an alternative therapy to facilitate patients who suffer from pain.