Efficacy of acupuncture in the management of atopic dermatitis: a systematic review.

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Abstract

Atopic dermatitis (AD) has a high negative impact on QoL. AP has antipruritic actions and may assist in treatment of AD; however, the current state of evidence for this remains unknown. We aimed to evaluate the efficacy of AP against placebo/sham AP in the management of AD. Electronic searches were conducted on a number of databases, from their inception until November 2013. Studies comparing the effects of AP with those of placebo/sham AP on severity of disease or symptoms/signs of AD were included. We did not find any studies that were eligible to be included in this systematic review. Among the excluded studies, there were two studies that evaluated the antipruritic effects of AP and one study that evaluated the effects of AP on IgE-mediated allergy. However, there were no randomized controlled trials evaluating the effects of AP on AD as a disease. This finding therefore provides an indication of the current state of evidence of AP in the management of AD, and highlights the research gap that exists, in that there is a lack of gold-standard studies (i.e. RCTs) to support valid conclusions.

CONCLUSIONS: There is currently no evidence of the effects of AP in the management of AD, and no evidence-based recommendations or conclusions can be made from this review. Several studies indicated that AP may have a role in reducing itch or regulating IgE-mediated allergy, both of which are major characteristics of AD. However, there were no RCTs evaluating the effects of AP on AD as a disease. There is therefore an urgent need for rigorously designed RCTs to assess the efficacy of AP in the management of AD. © 2015 British Association of Dermatologists.