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Traditional Chinese Medicine acupuncture and myofascial trigger needling: The same stimulation points?

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Highlights

- MTrPs are significantly correlated to TCM acupoints.
- The extent of correspondence is influenced by definitions of acupoints.
- Research findings of MTrPs may assist with further exploration of Ah-shi points.

Abstract

Background

Acupuncture originates in China, and its effectiveness has been well documented in musculoskeletal pain disorders and other conditions. A widely accepted contemporary medical treatment option for myofascial pain is trigger point needling. Although there are many differences between Traditional Chinese Medicine acupuncture theory and the myofascial trigger point needling framework, it is argued that the stimulation sites for these two needling modalities are similar.

Discussion

In this paper we examined the correspondence between Traditional Chinese Medicine acupoints and myofascial trigger points. Based on this correspondence, we considered exploration of Ah-shi points from four aspects: pain recognition, distal Ah-shi points, Anti-Ah-shi points, and management approaches.

Summary: The extent of correspondence is influenced by definitions of acupoints. Myofascial trigger points are significantly correlated to Traditional Chinese Medicine acupoints, including primary channel acupoints, extra acupoints, and Ah-shi points. Considering the correlation between MTrPs and acupoints and the rarely-studied research area of Ah-shi points, it may be reasonable to incorporate research findings of myofascial trigger points into further investigations into Ah-shi points. Correspondence between myofascial trigger points and acupoints enhances contemporary understanding of the mechanism of action of acupuncture, and may serve to facilitate increased integration of acupuncture into clinical management.