

Acupuncture as an Adjunctive Therapy in Osteoarthritis of the Knee

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A randomized and controlled study was performed in order to determine whether acupuncture provides greater pain relief and improved function compared with sham acupuncture or education in patients with osteoarthritis of the knee. For the 570 patients with osteoarthritis of the knee, 23 real acupuncture sessions were given over 26 weeks and 23 sham acupuncture sessions were given over 26 weeks. The primary outcomes were changes in the Western Ontario and McMaster Universities Osteoarthritis Index (WOMAC) pain and function scores at 8 and 26 weeks. The secondary outcomes were patient global assessment, 6-minute walk distance, and physical health scores of the 36-Item Short-Form Health Survey (SF-36).

The patients in the real acupuncture group experienced greater improvement in the WOMAC function scores than the sham acupuncture group at 8 weeks but not in the WOMAC pain score or the patient global assessment. At 26 weeks, the real acupuncture group experienced significantly greater improvement than the sham group in the WOMAC function score, the WOMAC pain score, and patient global assessment. In conclusion, acupuncture seems to provide improvement in function and pain relief as an adjunctive therapy for osteoarthritis of the knee when compared with credible sham acupuncture and education control groups.