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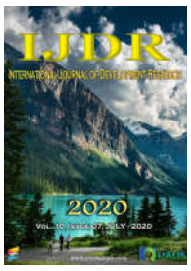

RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

EVALUATION OF PAIN IN PATIENTS SUBMITTED ACUPUNCTURE THERAPY IN

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ABSTRACT

Pain is characterized as an unpleasant, subjective sensation associated with an injury real or potential. Its involvement in physiological, cognitive and behavioral variables is recognized, considering the determinant complaints of people who seek treatment in health services. One of the means appreciated in the therapeutic environment to reduce painful symptoms is the use of the acupuncture technique, a process that takes place by redirecting and realigning energy, through the stimulation of specific points. Acupuncture has been shown to be more and more frequent in recent years, especially with regard to pain symptoms. The objective of this study was to carry out an evaluation on the effectiveness of using acupuncture therapy in improving pain and ending its eventual benefits. This is studylongitudinal cross-sectional in which the study population comprised patients undergoing acupuncture sections treated at a private clinic in a municipality in the southwest of Bahia. The main instrument used for data collection was the application of an anamnesis with questions regarding pain and the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS). The results showed that among the main complaints, the prevalence of low back pain stood out, referring to its analgesia through the acupuncture technique, as well as other complaints, representing, therefore, a relevant data that justifies the actions performed with use needles to relieve pain. The data also showed the need for further studies that scientifically prove the effectiveness of acupuncture as an analgesic method, allowing the effectiveness of this type of treatment, migrating from the experimental field to the scientific environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Pain is characterized as an unpleasant, subjective sensation, associated with a real or potential injury. The involvement of physiological, cognitive and behavioral pain variables is recognized, considering the determinant complaints of people who seek treatment in health services.Although great advances in medicine, protocols for pain control still require studies (Santos; Peres, 2016). According to Teixeira and Durão 2016, pain is constantly in the individual in a critical situation, related to various diseases, due to the opposition of the dialogue, fear, anxiety, invasive and non-invasive methods. The experiment experienced by the patient, manifests changes in the degree of consciousness, circulation, sleep, metabolic, gastrointestinal and psychological changes. The pain in the body works as a warning sign intensifying protective responses, it acts as a norm for the presence of pain to be diagnosed and recorded.

One of the means appreciated in the therapeutic environment to reduce painful symptoms is the use of the acupuncture technique, a process that takes place by redirecting and realigning energy, through the stimulation of specific points. It is a therapy derived from Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). This medicine seeks to highlight all the events that produce functional and organic changes that lead to the manifestation of signs and symptoms (ORNELA et, al., 2016; LIMA, 2018). There are several explanations for how acupuncture works. The MTC mentions that it is the energy rebalancing of the organism that establishes improvement, according to the stimulated points. Other studies claim that the use of needles at these points encourages the production of hormones, helping to reduce pain, contributing to accelerate the healing of inflammation. It is considered that the benefits of this therapeutic method are evident, improving the physiological system, acting on immunity and also on the

nervous system (Belmiro; Oliveira; Camilotti, 2013). In Brazil, the acupuncture technique was inserted in the table of the Outpatient Information System - SIA / SUS in 1999, through Ordinance No. 1230 / GM, published by the Ministry of Health in 2006, which approved the National Policy for Integrative and Complementary Practices in Unified Health System (SUS). This document defines that the SUS includes approaches and resources that seek to encourage the natural mechanisms for preventing injuries and recovering health (Rocha et al., 2015; Brasil, 2006). The use of acupuncture has been shown to be more and more frequent in recent years, mainly with regard to pain symptoms, however there are still few studies and researches that elucidate the practice of acupuncture in society (CARVALHO et al., 2015; NUNES et al., 2017). In this context, the present study aimed to verify and evaluate the effectiveness of using acupuncture therapy in improving pain andending any benefits.

METHODOLOGY

This is a longitudinal cross-sectional survey. The study population comprised 20 patients seen at a private clinic in a municipality in the southwest of Bahia where they performed acupuncture sections. In this study, in order to obtain data collection, an anamnesis was carried out with the patients, with questions about the level of pain, main complaint, characteristics of pain, characteristics of burning in the area of pain, accompanying symptoms and pain intensity. One of the main instruments used as a source of information was the Visual ScaleAnalogue (VAS), which consists of a horizontal line that allows the measurement of the patient's pain intensity by classifying the pain from mild to severe. Patients were asked to mark the line with a vertical line indicating the intensity of their pain at the time of acupuncture sessions. Study participants were selected at random. All were informed about the research protocol and were only admitted to the study after signing the Informed Consent Form (ICF). With the data obtained from the anamnesis, a database was created in an Excel spreadsheet (version 2010, Microsoft®) and, subsequently, a descriptive statistical analysis was performed. The study was submitted to and approved by the Ethics and Research Committee of the Public Health Foundation of Vitória da Conquista, complying with the rules and guidelines in force in the country.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results shown here discuss in their first part, answers regarding the sample characteristics of the patients, in which it was verified that statistically similar responses were obtained (Table 1). Most answered no to questions about pain characteristics such as electric shock and painful cold sensation (80%), symptoms in the same area of pain (61.25%), hypoesthesia characteristics (65%) and pain intensity (75 %). Acupuncture has shown good results in the treatment of pain cases, due to its anti-inflammatory, myo-relaxing and activating immune function in the body. Bavieira, et al., (2019) reports in his study that analgesia in the context of acupuncture happens through the activation of a pain control system, a complex system that includes the stimulation of neurons from different regions of the brain. These neurons send a pain inhibition signal to the spinal cord. In this system, neurotransmitters are present, which are also released to contribute to the analgesic effect of acupuncture.

Table 1. Distribution of responses about symptoms in the same area of pain and location of pain where the examination may reveal hypoesthesia characteristics

Variables		n	%
Symptoms			
Tingling	No	12	60
	Yes	8	40
Pinpricks	No	13	65
	Yes	7	35
Sleep	No	12	60
	Yes	8	40
Itching	No	12	60
	Yes	8	40
Characteristics of hypoesthesia			
Hypoesthesia to the touch	No	1	5
	Yes	8	40
	Null	11	55
Needle hypoesthesia	No	15	75
	Yes	2	10
	Null	3	15

Source: Research data.

Table 2. Distribution of responses on pain characteristics and main complaint

		n	%
Characteristics Of Pain			
Burning	No	9	45
	Yes	11	55
Painful cold sensation	No	18	90
	Yes	2	10
Electric shock	No	14	70
	Yes	6	30
Main complaints		10	50
(Back pain, low back pain and knee)			
Other complaints		10	50
Migraine		2	10
Muscle pain		1	5
Wrist pain		1	5
Sciatic nerve		1	5
Shoulder pain		2	10
Arthritis		1	5
Neck pain		1	5
Joint pain		1	5

Source: Research data.

Regarding the location of pain in an area where physical examination may reveal characteristics of hypoaesthesia, 25% of the patients in this study reported feeling hypoaesthesia on touch and the needle stick, 65% said they did not and four patients (20%) did not answer this question. The stimulation of points on the body, with characteristics to act on the diseased organ, establishes the energy balance of the organism and, thus, it is possible to achieve good therapeutic results, explains Zotelli et al., (2012).

In Table 2, it is possible to observe that only in the answers about the main complaint and burning characteristics in the area of pain, differences were observed, in which 55% of the patients responded feeling different complaints and burning sensation, related to the characteristics of the pain. The data indicate that among the main complaints, there is a prevalence of low back pain among the patients who answered this question. This result was similar to the study by Carvalho, et al., (2015), which explains that low back pain may be related to the performance of household chores together with work outside the home, as well as exposure to ergonomic loads, repetition, position vicious and work at great speed. In the studies by Jiménez et al., (2016) and Austin, et al., (2012) in which they applied traditional acupuncture, patients reported considerable improvement in low back pain when compared to

patients who adopted conventional treatment with drug therapy, reporting significant improvement in functional ability, halving the average number of days with pain. According to the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS), a relevant aspect to determine pain intensity, in which the parameter from zero to two is classified as mild pain, three to seven as moderate pain and eight to ten as severe pain. As for the intensity of pain, in patients undergoing acupuncture sections, the prevalence of moderate pain (3 to 7) in 55% of patients was noted in this study, while 35% of patients had mild pain (1 to 2) and only 10% reported severe pain (8). According to Branco et al., (2016), in his research also carried out with patients submitted to acupuncture sections, however with a larger sample, totaling sixty patients, demonstrated that the average pain at the beginning of the treatment was 7.35 and in the end it fell to 2.67, thus an average reduction of 4.79. According to the author, the visual analog scale has proved to be a good indicator of evaluation. As pain directly interferes with quality of life, its improvement generates consequent comfort, health and reduced impact on the lives of these patients. For Cintra and Pereira (2012), in traditional Chinese medicine, everyone must be evaluated as unique, considering their particularities.

Final Considerations

This study brought results on the evaluation of the effectiveness of using acupuncture in improving pain. It aims to significantly alleviate patients' low back pain, as well as other limbs frequently reported as pain crises, referring to its analgesia through the acupuncture technique, also proven in other studies. It therefore represents a relevant data that justifies the actions taken with the use of needles to relieve pain. Acupuncture is shown as a choice of adjuvant therapy for pain control, since it has minimal adverse effects and contraindications. Although reports and clinical trials are successful, further studies are needed to scientifically confirm the effectiveness of acupuncture as an analgesic method. These researches will allow the effectiveness of this type of treatment, migrating from the experimental field to the scientific environment.

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