

Complementary effects of auricular acupressure in relieving constipation symptoms and promoting disease-specific health-related quality of life: A randomized placebo-controlled trial

M K Li, T F Diana Lee, K P Lorna Suen

Abstract

Objectives: Constipation has been identified as a worldwide health problem among elderly people. Currently, it is not effectively relieved by the use of laxatives and lifestyle modification. Previous studies reported promising results in managing constipation with auricular acupressure (AA), although its effectiveness was not affirmed. This study is to evaluate the complementary effects of AA in relieving constipation symptoms and in promoting disease-specific health-related quality of life (HRQOL) among elderly residential care home (RCH) residents in Hong Kong.

Design: Randomized placebo-controlled trial.

Setting: Elderly RCH.

Intervention: Ninety-nine participants were randomly assigned to either experimental group (AA using auricular plasters with magnetic pellets), placebo-controlled group (AA using auricular plasters with Semen Vaccariae), or usual care group (AA using auricular plasters only). AA was applied onto seven auricular acupoints for 10 days.

Main outcome measures: Constipation symptoms and disease-specific HRQOL were measured before AA, at the completion of AA (D10), and at the 10th-day follow-up time (D20).

Results: Significant group×time interaction effect was found in the change of satisfaction subscale between the experimental group and placebo-controlled group at D10 ($p=0.016$) and D20 ($p=0.016$) relative to the baselines. For both constipation symptoms and disease-specific HRQOL, the experimental group demonstrated the greatest improvement after receiving AA at both D10 and D20 compared with the other two groups.

Conclusion: The current findings indicated positive clinical value of AA with magnetic pellets in managing constipation in elderly RCH residents. AA was also found to be a safe and acceptable intervention.

Keywords: Auricular acupressure; Constipation; Elderly people; Health-related quality of life; Residential care home.

Copyright © 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24731898/>