Acupuncture in psychiatry

Kajsa Landgren, PhD, RN, acupuncturist
NADA Finland, Helsinki, September 6, 2013
Faculty of Medicine
Department of Health Sciences
LUND UNIVERSITY

Acupuncture is used...

- ...in addiction and in psychiatric diagnoses

How common is it?

- > 3000 persons in Sweden (and > 2800 persons in Denmark) have NADA-training

Several psychiatric hospitals

- ...use ear acupuncture as a part of the treatment
- outpatients and inpatients
- ...have >50 staff members with NADA-training

Anxiety, depression and insomnia

- ... are common diseases
- Symptoms exacerbate each other
- There is a comorbidity between these symptoms and pain, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, obesity ...
- Many patients combine western medicine with CAM

Acupuncture...

- Relieves pain
- Improves the immune system
- Balances internal imbalances
- Affects emotions and sleep
How does acupuncture work?

- Release of neurotransmitters and hormones such as endorphins, serotonin, norepinephrine, oxytocin, cortisol, melatonin....
- In auricular acupuncture parasympatikus is more affected than sympatikus
- Placebo

Clinical effects?

- Patient benefits
  - Reduced symptoms
  - Less medication
  - Better progress
- Staff benefits
  - Better progress
  - Creates alliance
  - It’s fun
- Clinic benefits
  - Acupuncture is cheap, safe, effective

Advantages:

- It works!
- Reduces the need for medication on demand, sedatives and sleeping pills
- Not addictive
- Good for the environment

Acupuncture...

- Doesn't cure schizophrenia!

But acupuncture can...

- make every-day-life easier, increase QoL
- reduce depression
- stabilize mood swings
- reduce panic and intense anxiety
- reduce aggression
- promote sleep
- reduce medications

Anxiety

- Soooooo many articles show decreased anxiety / anxiety as a side effect in patients who received acupuncture for somatic problems
- A review (Pilkington et al 2007) including 12 trials showed acupuncture effect on GAD and anxiety neurosis
- Especially ear acupuncture is more effective than sham and has the same effect as medication
New articles about anxiety

- Treating generalized anxiety disorder using complementary and alternative medicine. (McPherson & McGraw 2013, ... Army Medical Center, USA)
- The Effect of Acupuncture on Working Memory and Anxiety (Bussell et al 2013)

Conventional treatment of anxiety

- Medication
  - Has modest effect
  - Is addictive
  - Has negative side effects

  CBT
  - Effective but expensive and “in short supply”

Depression

- > 300 trials
- Cochrane-analysis (Smith & Hay, 2005): “Seven trials comprising 517 subjects met the inclusion criteria...There was no evidence that medication was better than acupuncture in reducing the severity of depression ...or in ...remission...”

New articles about depression

- Cochrane is not sure about “…treating antenatal depression” (Dennis & Dowswel 2013)
- Acupuncture had effect in women with PCOS (Stener-Victorin et al 2013)
- A review concluded that acupuncture is effective in mood disorders (Qureshi & Al-Bedah 2013)

Acupuncture ups SSRI

- “A 6-week randomized controlled trial with 4-week follow-up of acupuncture combined with paroxetine in patients with major depressive disorder” (Qu et al 2013) and “Improvement in quality of life in depressed patients...” (Ma et al 2013) and “Dense Cranial EA...” (Zhang et al 2012) showed better effect with acupuncture
- Electroacupuncture is better than medication (83% versus 60%) (Chen et al 2013)

Depression, news, continued

- Ear acupuncture had effect in rats (Liu et al 2013)
- Laser acupuncture significantly reduced depression symptoms in an RCT (Quah-Smith et al 2013)
- significantly larger clinical improvement compared to the placebo group (Eich et al 2013)
- acupuncture as monotherapy was safe, well-tolerated and effective in major depressive disorder (Mischoulon et al 2013)
Depression, news, continued

- Electroacupuncture has an antidepressant effect and prevents atrophy of brain glia cells (Qiong Liua et al 2011)
- Acupuncture significantly improved quality of life, pain, depression and mobility in the eyes for MS patients (Quispe-Cabanillas et al 2012)

Compare with:

- The modest effect of medication
- Increased tolerance
- Side effects
- Influence on the environment

Sleep and acupuncture:

- >100 studies in Pubmed
- No study shows that acupuncture don’t promote sleep
- Acupuncture effect is equal to sleeping pills – but has no side effects

Metaanalysis, Chen et al 2007

- “…The recovery and improvement rates produced by AA was significantly higher than those of diazepam (p < 0.05). The rate of success was higher when AA was used for enhancement of sleeping hours up to 6 hours in treatment subjects (p < 0.05). The efficacy of using Semen vaccariae ear seeds was better than that of the controls (p < 0.01).”

News about acupuncture & sleep

- Patients with schizophrenia or depression who got TCM acupuncture slept significantly better than waiting list (Bosch et al 2013)
- “Acupressure improves sleep quality of psychogeriatric inpatients” (Lu et al 2013)
- Acupuncture improved sleep in rats (Cheng et al 2012) and in pigs (Takeishi et al 2012)

In disturbed sleep:

- Acupuncture is useful to
- - promote sleep
- - to taper down sleeping pills
News, other diagnoses

- “Complementary and alternative medicine in the treatment of refugees and survivors of torture”, a review (Longacre et al 2013)
- NADA in elderly with dementia, conference paper (Smyth 2012)
- “A case study exploration of the value of acupuncture as an adjunct treatment for patients diagnosed with schizophrenia: results and future study design” (Ronan 2011)

News, other diagnoses

- Acupuncture biochemically reduces memory loss due to chronic stress (Hyunyoung Kima et al 2011)
- Acupuncture is more effective than paroxetine for relief of PTSD due to earthquake trauma (Yu Wang et al 2012)

Conclusion

- Insomnia, depression and anxiety are major problems which decreases life quality
- Acupuncture can reduce symptoms
- Acupuncture is safe and cheap

Why standardized ear acupuncture, like NADA?

- Fast to learn and to give, simple, cheap
- Well tolerated by patients, non verbal
- Group treatment is possible
- Easy to combine with seeds
- It works good enough

More advantages:

- Side effects are that even somatic symptoms are relieved
- Safe in pregnancy
- Easy to implement
- Hands on
- Very caring

About acupuncture:

- “It produces balance where balance doesn’t exist.
- It produces strength where lives are very fragile.”

* [Ana Oliveira, in the film “Points to change”]
Visions
• Yes,……

Acupuncture in war
Kajsa Landgren, PhD, RN, acupuncturist
Lund University, Sweden
NADA Europe, Graz, 2013

Acupuncture
• The use of acupuncture is increasing in war zones and for soldiers having returned home

Example: USA
• 1.8 millions persons have served in Afganistan and Iraq [Lee et al 2011]
• About 20% of veterans have a ”mild traumatic brain injury “ or a posttraumatic stress-syndrom (PTSD) [Helms et al 2011]
• = PTSD is a national problem

PTSD
• Symptoms can be headache, pain, anxiety, sleeping disorders, night mares and depression. Addiction is very common. High rate of suicide

Many veterans need help
• Medication for pain, anxiety and PTSD has limited effect and negative side effects (e.g addiction) [Lee et al 2011]
• There is an urge for effective, cheap and non-addictive treatments
• The interest for CAM increases
In the war zone

• In the 80-ties: acupuncture was introduced in a small scale
• In the 90-ties: acupuncture trainings for MD’s in the United States Air Force

Two...

... standardized ear acupuncture protocols to relieve pain and PTSD
• “Battle Field Acupuncture” (BFA)
• “Auricular Trauma Protocol” (ATP)

BattleField Acupuncture, BFA

• developed by R Niemtzow (MD and colonel) in 2002
• Aimed to achieve rapid pain relief
• gives 1-3 days of pain reduction (Belard & Pock 2011)
• Easy to implement (Burns et al 2013)

BFA

• semi-permanent gold needles (ASP) are used in five points in the ear: Shen Men, Point Zero, Thalamus (pain), Cingulate Gyrus (emotions, aggression) and Omega 2

“Auricular Trauma Protocol” (ATP)

• Aimed to treat psychiatric symptoms like PTSD
• six standardised points: Shen Men, Point Zero, Master Cerebral, Hypothalamus, Amygdala and Hippocampus
• ordinary needles, 30-120 minutes plus seeds (Helms et al 2011)
• Ear points above + body points LI4 + LR3= “Koffmans cocktail”

Why acupuncture?

• Relieves pain
• Influences emotions and sleep
• Improves the immune system
• Balances internal imbalances
• Few side effects
• Non verbal
Why ear acupuncture?

- can be distributed in Battalion Aid Stations, passenger terminals, tactical vehicles, trenches
- Well tolerated by patients
- Performed away from the injury
- No need to disrobe/expose body parts

Why standardized ear acupuncture, like NADA, BFA and APT?

- Fast to learn and to give, simple, cheap
- Group treatment is possible
- Easy to combine with seeds
- It works good enough

Why semi permanent needles?

- Easily carried in a pocket
- Inserted in seconds
- “Needle Disposal Not Problematic” (according to Niemtzow)

Battlefield Implications:
Auricular Acupuncture well suited for harsh environments
Auricular Acupuncture in the Treatment of Acute Pain Syndromes (AATAPS)

• **Niemtzow et al:** The purpose of this study was to conduct a scientifically rigorous investigation of auricular acupuncture for the treatment of acute pain in the emergency room setting at a military hospital using a clinical trial design.

**Study Design**

• Randomized clinical trial of emergency room patients
• 100 Participants (N = 50 per group)
• Gold ASP needles were inserted in the ear at the Cingulate Gyrus and the Thalamus points bilaterally.
RESULTS

• Participants in the acupuncture group experienced a 23% reduction in pain compared to the non-acupuncture group.

Walter Reed Army Medical Center

• The Amputee Care Team has treated 600 traumatic amputees due to blast injuries from the current war in the Middle East
• This unique approach to pain management at the patient’s bedside has been extremely effective with many amputees who have not responded sufficiently to other traditional techniques