Acupuncture During Stroke Rehabilitation

To the Editor:

The systematic review and meta-analysis by Wu et al. is 1 of 17 (not 5, as Wu et al. state) similar reviews already available on the subject of acupuncture for stroke. Most of the reliable reviews drew negative conclusions.

The discrepancy between the findings of Wu et al. and our results may be attributable to several factors. For instance, Wu et al. rely heavily on the Chinese studies. These have repeatedly been shown to virtually never produce negative results, which casts doubt on their reliability. Wu et al. pool all of the available data regardless of types of control intervention; cautious interpretation is thus advisable. Wu et al. use odd ratios, which, compared to risk ratios, inflate the overall effect size. Several of the primary studies included by Wu et al. adopted a study design that is incapable of generating negative results. Wu et al. also confirm that in “all the studies in which sham acupuncture was used, no differential effectiveness from true acupuncture was found.”

Given all of these caveats, we find it difficult to agree with their overall conclusion that “acupuncture may be effective in the treatment of poststroke rehabilitation” and arrive at a dramatically different verdict: acupuncture is not an evidence-based treatment during stroke rehabilitation.

Disclosure

None.

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