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The Acupuncture on Hot Flashes Among Menopausal Women (ACUFLASH) study, a randomized controlled trial.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE: This study compared the effectiveness of individualized acupuncture plus self-care versus self-care alone on hot flashes and health-related quality of life in postmenopausal women.

METHODS: This study involved a multicenter, pragmatic, randomized, controlled trial with two parallel arms. Participants were postmenopausal women experiencing, on average, seven or more hot flashes per 24 hours during seven consecutive days. The acupuncture group received 10 acupuncture treatment sessions and advice on self-care, and the control group received advice on self-care only. The frequency and severity (0-10 scale) of hot flashes were registered in a diary. Urine excretion of calcitonin gene-related peptide was assessed at baseline and after 12 weeks. The primary endpoint was change in mean hot flash frequency from baseline to 12 weeks. The secondary endpoint was change in health-related quality of life measured by the Women's Health Questionnaire.

RESULTS: Hot flash frequency decreased by 5.8 per 24 hours in the acupuncture group (n = 134) and 3.7 per 24 hours in the control group (n = 133), a difference of 2.1 (P < 0.001). Hot flash intensity decreased by 3.2 units in the acupuncture group and 1.8 units in the control group, a difference of 1.4 (P < 0.001). The acupuncture group experienced statistically significant improvements in the vasomotor, sleep, and somatic symptoms dimensions of the Women's Health Questionnaire compared with the control group. Urine calcitonin gene-related peptide excretion remained unchanged from baseline to week 12.

CONCLUSIONS: Acupuncture plus self-care can contribute to a clinically relevant reduction in hot flashes and increased health-related quality of life in postmenopausal women.

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