



NEW RESEARCH

Acute Renal Colic: Acupuncture for the Pain

Editorial Staff

With acute renal colic – often caused by a urinary obstruction such as a kidney stone – on the list of acute health issues patients fear most because of the pain, it's good to know research [continues](#) to support acupuncture as a pain-relief option. Case in point: a new study authored by Jian-Feng Tu, et al., and published in *JAMA Network Open* (full text available for free: [click here](#)).

The randomized clinical trial, involving patients presenting with acute renal colic (Visual Analog Scale of 4 or higher) at an ER in China, evaluated whether acupuncture administered immediately after intramuscular injection of diclofenac sodium (50 mg/2 mL) relieved pain more than injections and sham acupuncture.

Licensed acupuncturists with at least five years of experience provided real or sham acupuncture at EX-UE 7 bilaterally, with needle manipulation for a minimum of 30 seconds per point to achieve *de qi* sensation.

The response rate (percentage of patients experiencing a 50 percent or greater reduction in pain from baseline, based on comparison of VAS scores) 10 minutes after needle manipulation was significantly higher in the acupuncture group (77.5 percent of patients) compared to the sham group (only 10.0 percent of patients).



Differences in response rates were also significant at other time points (0, 5, 15, 20 and 30 minutes) during the 30-minute acupuncture session, but not at 45 and 60 minutes.

While rescue analgesia use did not differ significantly between groups (which the authors explain may be due to "the ceiling effect caused by subsequent but robust analgesia of diclofenac"), they note that findings suggest "acupuncture combined with intramuscular injection of diclofenac is safe and provides fast and substantial pain relief for patients with renal colic compared with sham acupuncture in the emergency setting."

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