



ATOPIC ECZEMA/DERMATITIS

## THE ROLE OF ACUPUNCTURE THERAPY AS AN ADJUNCT TO STANDARD THERAPY FOR PRURITUS IN PATIENTS WITH ATOPIC DERMATITIS: A PATIENT- AND ASSESSOR- BLINDED, RANDOMIZED, PLACEBO- CONTROLLED TRIAL

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**Introduction:** Pruritus, characteristic of Atopic Dermatitis, can impair quality of life. There is evidence that acupuncture is a promising treatment adjunct. However, there is a lack of clinical trials to prove its efficacy.

**Objective:** This study aimed to determine the efficacy of acupuncture in reducing pruritus intensity, disease severity, improving quality of life, and decreasing medication use.

**Materials and Methods:** This was a prospective, patient- and assessor-blinded, randomized, placebo-controlled trial. Patients with Atopic Dermatitis underwent twice-weekly acupuncture for 12 weeks with an 8 week follow-up period with measurement of mean itch intensity (VAS), scoring of atopic dermatitis (SCORAD) and quality of life (DLQI). Baseline characteristics were compared using independent t-test and Fisher's exact test. Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance was used for continuous variables. Comparisons were made using two-tailed analysis and p-values <0.05 were considered statistically significant.

**Results:** Thirty patients (17 male, 13 female) aged 7-53 years were recruited. Baseline characteristics were uniform. Both groups showed reduction in VAS ( $p < 0.024$ ) with greater reduction in TA ( $p = 0.009$ ). Patient-reported improvement of pruritus was sustained during the follow-up period for TA compared to SA ( $p = 0.043$ ). SCORAD decreased in both groups ( $p < 0.001$ ) but not significant when compared ( $p = 0.252$ ). Quality of life improved in both groups but not significant when compared to baseline ( $p = 0.063$ ) and against each other ( $p = 0.257$ ). There was a reduction in medication use for both groups throughout the





treatment and follow-up period.

Conclusions: Acupuncture is a promising treatment adjunct for pediatric and adult patients with atopic dermatitis with positive effects on patients' quality of life. This study concludes that acupuncture, on established points for pruritus or otherwise, reduces pruritus but acupuncture at the correct points provides greater reduction that is sustained two months after the last acupuncture session. Studies with higher sample size are encouraged. Individualized acupuncture points are also worth exploring.

