



Low Level Laser Therapy & Alcoholism

clinical research

ACUPUNCTURE FOR ALCOHOL WITHDRAWAL: A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL

François Trümppler¹, Suzan Oez¹, Peter Stähli², Hans Dieter Brenner³ and Peter Jüni^{4,5,*}

¹ Psychiatric Hospital Münsingen, 3110 Münsingen,

² Department of Complementary Medicine (KIKOM), Inselspital, University of Berne, 3010 Berne,

³ Department of Social and Community Psychiatry, University of Berne, Laupenstrasse 49, 3010 Berne, Switzerland,

⁴ MRC Health Services Research Collaboration, Department of Social Medicine, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK and

⁵ Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, University of Berne, Finkenhubelweg 11, 3012 Berne, Switzerland

Received 1 February 2002; in revised form 11 March 2003; accepted 27 March 2003

Background and Aims: Previous trials on acupuncture in alcohol addiction were in outpatients and focused on relapse prevention. Rates of dropout were high and interpretation of results difficult. We compared auricular laser and needle acupuncture with sham laser stimulation in reducing the duration of alcohol withdrawal. **Methods:** Inpatients undergoing alcohol withdrawal were randomly allocated to laser acupuncture ($n = 17$), needle acupuncture ($n = 15$) or sham laser stimulation ($n = 16$). Attempts were made to blind patients, therapists and outcome assessors, but this was not feasible for needle acupuncture. The duration of withdrawal symptoms (as assessed using a nurse-rated scale) was the primary outcome; the duration of sedative prescription was the secondary outcome. **Results:** Patients randomized to laser and sham laser had identical withdrawal symptom durations (median 4 days). Patients randomized to needle stimulation had a shorter duration of withdrawal symptoms (median 3 days; $P = 0.019$ versus sham intervention), and tended to have a shorter duration of sedative use, but these differences diminished after adjustment for baseline differences. **Conclusions:** The data from this pilot trial do not suggest a relevant benefit of auricular laser acupuncture for alcohol withdrawal. A larger trial including adequate sham interventions is needed, however, to reliably determine the effectiveness of any type of auricular acupuncture in this condition.

Qlaser Wellness Solutions
Michael F. Lagana, President
708 Route 35 N., Neptune, NJ 07753
732 866-4226
Michael@Qlaserws.com