

Women with PCOS benefited from acupuncture

Acupuncture and physical activity improved hormone levels and menstrual patterns in women with polycystic ovary syndrome, according to a study conducted by researchers in Sweden.

Jedel E. *Am J Physiol Endocrinol Metab.* 2011;300:37-45.

The study included 84 women aged 18 to 37 years with PCOS. For 16 weeks, the women were assigned to exercise at least three times per week, no intervention or acupuncture with needles that were stimulated manually and with a weak electric current at a low frequency that was similar to muscular work. All women were provided with information on the importance of regular exercise and a healthy diet. The researchers' goal was to determine whether electro-acupuncture would decrease hyperandrogenism and improve menstrual patterns.

The primary outcome, change in total testosterone at week 1, was -25% among women assigned to electro-acupuncture vs. exercise. Other secondary measures included a -30% decrease in androsterone glucuronide and an increase in menstrual frequency of 0.69 per month vs. 0.28 at baseline, when researchers compared the electro-acupuncture group with the exercise group.

"The study shows that both acupuncture and exercise reduce high levels of testosterone and lead to more regular menstruation," Elisabet Stener-Victorin, PhD, docent associate professor at the University of Gothenburg, said in a press release. "Of the two treatments, the acupuncture proved more effective."

After an additional 16 weeks of follow-up, acne score decreased by 32% with electro-acupuncture compared with exercise and no intervention.

Although PCOS is a common disorder, researchers do not know exactly what causes it, according to the release.

"However, we've recently demonstrated that women with PCOS have a highly active sympathetic nervous system, the part that isn't controlled by our will, and that both acupuncture and regular exercise reduced levels of activity in this system compared with the control group, which could be an explanation of the benefits," Stener-Victorin said.

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