▪ Headache Medicine 2026, Supplement ▪ p-ISSN 2178-7468, e-ISSN 2763-6178

Headache Medicine

ID: 293

Acupuncture for migraine prophylaxis: evidence on reducing attack frequency

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Introduction
Migraine is a highly prevalent and disabling neurological disorder associated with reduced quality of life and substantial socioeconomic burden. Although pharmacological prophylaxis is the standard treatment, adverse effects and poor adherence have increased interest in complementary therapies such as acupuncture. However, its effectiveness in migraine prevention remains under discussion.

Objective
To analyze the evidence regarding the effectiveness of acupuncture in reducing migraine attack frequency compared with conventional treatment, placebo, or no prophylactic intervention.

Methods
This literature review was developed based on the following PICO question: "In patients with migraine, does acupuncture, compared with conventional treatment or no treatment, reduce the frequency of migraine attacks?" The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. A search was conducted in the PubMed database using the descriptors ("Migraine Disorders" OR "Migraine") AND ("Acupuncture Therapy" OR "Acupuncture") AND ("Prevention and Control" OR "Prophylaxis"). Initially, 158 studies were identified. Filters were then applied to include publications from the last 10 years, studies involving humans, articles published in English, and study designs classified as clinical trials, meta-analyses, or observational studies. After title and abstract screening, duplicate studies, articles not directly related to migraine prophylaxis, and publications that did not address the research question were excluded. The remaining studies underwent full-text review. A total of seven articles were selected for qualitative synthesis

Results
The selected studies showed that acupuncture significantly reduced migraine attack frequency compared with usual care and no prophylactic treatment. Randomized trials demonstrated fewer headache days and sustained long-term benefits. Improvements in quality of life and reduced use of rescue medications were also reported. Meta-analyses found acupuncture to be as effective as, or superior to, some pharmacological prophylactic therapies, with fewer adverse effects. Recent evidence suggests outcomes comparable to topiramate in chronic migraine prevention.

Conclusion
Current evidence supports acupuncture as an effective and safe option for migraine prophylaxis, reducing attack frequency and improving clinical outcomes. Its favorable safety profile makes it a valuable complementary therapy. However, variations in study designs and acupuncture protocols limit direct comparisons. Further standardized studies are needed to strengthen clinical recommendations.

Keywords:
Migraine
Headache
Prophylaxis
Acupuncture

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