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Efficacy of Acupuncture for Insomnia: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

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Abstract

Patients with insomnia frequently use acupuncture as an alternative treatment to pharmacotherapy globally. The aim of this paper is to assess the effect of acupuncture on insomnia. Seven medical databases, including MEDLINE, EMBASE, CENTRAL, CNKI, RISS, NDSL, and OASIS, were used to identify studies published through July 09, 2020. Twenty-four randomized controlled trials (RCTs) were included in this qualitative review comparing acupuncture to either pharmacotherapy or sham-acupuncture therapy. Methodological quality was assessed, using the Cochrane risk of bias (ROB). In the subsequent quantitative meta-analysis of studies comparing acupuncture versus pharmacotherapy, fifteen RCTs demonstrated that acupuncture had a significant effect on patients with insomnia as assessed by the Pittsburgh sleep quality index (PSQI) (RR: -0.74 ; 95% CI: -1.07 to -0.40 ; $P < 0.0001$; $I^2 = 89\%$; $n = 1475$). A subgroup analysis showed that there was no significant effect after weeks 1 and 2, but six studies found that acupuncture had a significant effect insomnia at week 3 (RR: -0.97 ; 95% CI: -1.65 to -0.28 ; $P = 0.006$; $I^2 = 91\%$; $n = 463$) and nine studies demonstrated a significant effect at week 4 (RR: -0.70 ; 95% CI: -1.15 to -0.25 ; $P = 0.002$; $I^2 = 85\%$; $n = 594$). These results suggest that insomnia patients may experience significant improvement in symptoms after more than three weeks of acupuncture treatment compared to pharmacological treatments.

Keywords: [Insomnia](#) • [Sleep Disorders](#) • [Acupuncture](#) • [Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index](#) •
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