Review of Adverse Events in Acupuncture Treatment

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- Objective: To investigate documented surveys about adverse events of acupuncture therapy

- Methods: We searched Medline with the terms of 'acupuncture/adverse event(s)', 'acupuncture/side effect(s)' and 'CAM/adverse event(s)' using Pubmed and set the limits to human study.

- Results: There were 5 prospective studies, 3 reviews and 3 surveys in our searching. There were 3 reports about acupuncture related adverse events in UK ranging from 10.7% to 15% of which the rate of significant events were from 0.13% to 0.14%. In Germany, there were 11% of acupuncture related adverse events in one report and 7.5% (significant events were 45 in 190,924 patients) in another report. In Australia, one study reported that every adverse event associated with acupuncture occurred in 8-9 month per one practitioner. In Japan, 0.14% of acupuncture related adverse events in 48 practitioners were reported in one systemic review. A cumulative review about significant adverse events associated with acupuncture reported 715 adverse events of which most frequent accidents were pneumothorax and central nervous system injury.

- Conclusion: The risk of adverse event associated with acupuncture is far lower than that associated with other general medical interventions. However, some safety guidelines about the acupuncture performance are needed.

- Key words: acupuncture, adverse events.

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