Introduction

➢ Neuropathic pain syndromes account for a great degree of disability in lost work & school days for affected patients
➢ Neuropathic pain presents a treatment challenge, often unresponsive or minimally responsive to mainstays of chronic pain management (anticonvulsants, antidepressants, alpha agonists, narcotics, other adjunctive analgesics, physical & psychological counseling)
➢ Acupuncture has been shown to be effective in the management of neuropathic pain1,2,3. Auricular acupuncture is based on a homunculus on the surface of the ear4
➢ We offer auricular acupuncture in our multidisciplinary pediatric pain clinic, where adults are welcome for acupuncture only
➢ From September 2009 to July 2015, we provided auricular acupuncture, as an adjunct modality, for 18 pediatric & adult patients whose neuropathic pain control was sub-therapeutic with standard medical management
➢ This retrospective study analyzes the outcomes of auricular acupuncture provided by a single provider for 18 patients aged 11 to 78 years

Materials and Methods

➢ IRB approval was obtained
➢ Eighteen patients with neuropathic pain from CRPS I or II, phantom limb, trigeminal or post-herpetic neuralgia, or post-chemotherapy or peripheral neuropathy were treated.
➢ Sixteen patients were treated with sterile Auricular Semi-Permanent (ASP) acupuncture needles, & two with acupressure beads. Needles or beads were retained for three days
➢ Pain scores were collected immediately before & following treatment. Statistical analysis was performed

Results

➢ Seven pediatric & 11 adult patients were treated with auricular acupuncture for neuropathic pain
➢ The average pain scores (from 0-10) were 6.0+/-.2.3 (initial), & 0.66+/-.099 (final). The average pain reduction was 4.83+/-.2.18 (p<0.05) (Figure 1)
➢ Two patients failed treatment (pain score reduction <30%). However, 11 of 18 patients (61.1%) experienced complete resolution of neuropathic pain, and 16 patients (88.9%) had significant (at least 30%) reduction in pain (Figure 2)

Conclusions

➢ We conclude that auricular acupuncture is a highly effective adjunctive therapy in the management of neuropathic pain
➢ It may be considered for patients at the initiation of therapy, along with other modes of therapy, or when other therapies have failed or are contraindicated
➢ Although the mechanism for acupuncture remains elusive, acupuncture offers statistically significant & often profound benefits, with minimal side effects
➢ The application & utility of acupuncture in the management of pain are encouraging, as it offers safe, rapid, & profound relief
➢ Auricular acupuncture is a remote mode of therapy, is well tolerated by adults & even children
➢ Acupuncture is effective for needle-phobic patients

References

2NIH Consensus Development Conference on Acupuncture: November 3-5, 1997 William H. Natcher Conference Center National Institutes of Health Bethesda, MD

Figure 1. Pain Scores Pre- & Post-Treatment With Auricular Acupuncture or Acupressure

Figure 2. Response to Auricular Acupuncture or Acupressure

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