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Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders

Troubles fonctionnels gastro-intestinaux

1. Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis

1.1. Wan 2025

Wan R, Zeng X, Zhang Y, Wang H, Sun L, Chen S, Luo F, Hou Y, Zheng Q, Li Y. Potential benefit with acupuncture in functional gastrointestinal disorders: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Complement Ther Med. 2025 Oct;93:103230. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctim.2025.103230

Background	Many patients with functional gastrointestinal disorders (FGIDs) seek complementary and alternative therapies to improve gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms. Research on the use of acupuncture to improve GI symptoms has been growing, but the results have been inconsistent.
Objective	To provide a systematic review and meta-analysis of the effectiveness of acupuncture-based treatment for FGIDs using the latest data and a rigorous evaluation system.
Method	We searched PubMed, Web of Science, Cochrane Library and EMBASE (OVID interface) databases for randomized controlled trials (RCTs) of acupuncture in the treatment of FGIDs from database creation to October 15, 2023. We collected data on GI symptoms and adverse events, and meta-analysis was performed using STATA 16 software. The risk of bias was evaluated using the Cochrane's risk of bias version 2 (RoB2) tool. The quality of evidence was evaluated with the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation approach.
Results	**Twenty-nine RCTs involving 5100 participants** were included. The results of meta-analysis showed that compared with sham acupuncture (RR 1.65, 95 %CI 1.35-2.03) and Western medication (RR 1.15, 95 %CI 1.07-1.23), acupuncture had a higher response rate, which was related to acupuncture frequency and treatment course. Compared with sham acupuncture or usual care, acupuncture significantly improved GI symptoms, including general symptoms (SMD 0.48, 95 % CI 0.25-0.72), stool trait (MD 0.50, 95 %CI 0.22-0.78) and dyspepsia score (MD 10.67, 95 %CI 4.88-16.47). Compared with Western medication, acupuncture only had an advantage in improving the general symptoms of GI (SMD 1.33, 95 %CI 0.93-1.73). No differences in adverse events were observed between acupuncture and sham acupuncture or Western medication. The overall certainty of the evidence ranged from very low to moderate.
Conclusions	Current evidence suggests that acupuncture may have a positive effect on improving GI symptoms in FGIDs, but further high-quality studies are required to validate its efficacy. The available evidence is limited by methodological flaws and potential biases in the included studies, resulting in an overall low quality of evidence. Therefore, the interpretation of these findings should be interpreted with caution.

1.2. Wang 2021

Wang XY, Wang H, Guan YY, Cai RL, Shen GM. Acupuncture for functional gastrointestinal disorders: A systematic review and meta-analysis. J Gastroenterol Hepatol. 2021 Nov;36(11):3015-3026. https://doi.org/10.1111/jgh.15645

Objectives	The therapeutic effect of acupuncture treatments (AT) on functional gastrointestinal disorders (FGIDs) is contentious. A meta-analysis was conducted to assess the efficacy and safety of acupuncture for FGIDs.
Methods	The Cochrane Library, EMBASE, PUBMED, Web of Science, Wanfang Database, China National Knowledge Infrastructure, and VIP Database were searched through December 31, 2019 with no language restrictions. Risk ratio (RR) with 95% confidence interval (CI) was calculated to determine the improvement in symptom severity after treatment.
Results	A total of 61 randomized controlled trials (RCTs) on FGIDs were included. The pooled results illustrated the following: compared to pharmacotherapy (RR 1.13, 95% CI 1.09-1.17), placebo acupuncture (RR 1.69, 95% CI 1.37-2.08), no specific treatment (RR 1.86, 95% CI 1.31-2.62), and AT as an adjuvant intervention to other active treatments (RR 1.25, 95% CI 1.21-1.30), AT had more favorable improvements in symptom severity; **sub-group analysis** results classified according to functional dyspepsia (n=13), irritable bowel syndrome (n=19), and functional constipation (n=8) also supported this finding; and the incidence of adverse events was lower in AT than in other treatments (RR 0.75, 95% CI 0.56-0.99).
Conclusions	This meta-analysis found that AT was significantly associated with relief of FGIDs symptoms; however, the evidence level was moderate or low. Further data from rigorously designed and well powered RCTs are needed to verify the effectiveness and safety of AT as a FGIDs treatment.

2. Specific outcome

2.1. Emotional symptoms in patients with functional gastrointestinal disorders

2.1.1. Wang 2022

Wang L, Xian J, Sun M, Wang X, Zang X, Zhang X, Yu H, Tan QW. Acupuncture for emotional symptoms in patients with functional gastrointestinal disorders: A systematic review and meta-analysis. PLoS One. 2022 Jan 27;17(1):e0263166. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0263166

Background	Patients with functional gastrointestinal disorders (FGIDs) also often have emotional symptoms, such as anxiety and depression. The main drugs used for the treatment of FGIDs mainly target single gastrointestinal symptoms and are not effective in regulating emotional symptoms. Evidence has shown that acupuncture can relieve gastrointestinal symptoms in FGIDs patients, but there is no high-quality evidence to show that acupuncture can relieve psychological symptoms in these patients.
Objectives	To systematically evaluate the clinical efficacy and safety of acupuncture for emotional symptoms in patients with FGIDs.
Methods	Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) published from database inception through July 31, 2021, were retrieved from three English-language databases (PubMed, the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials, and Embase) and five Chinese-language databases (the China National Knowledge Infrastructure, Wanfang, VIP, Chinese Biomedical, and TCM Literature Analysis and Retrieval databases). RCTs that compared acupuncture with sham acupuncture and pharmacotherapy were included in this study. The score on the depression or anxiety scale after treatment were considered as primary outcomes. The 'meta' package (version 4.19-0) in RStudio 1.1.463 was used to analyse the data.

Results	A total of 2151 patients from 24 RCTs were included in this study. Compared with sham acupuncture, acupuncture was not significantly better at relieving anxiety (standardized mean difference [SMD] -0.35, 95% CI -1.05 to 0.33) and depression (SMD -0.32, 95% CI -0.71 to 0.07) symptoms. Compared with pharmacotherapy, acupuncture was significantly better at relieving anxiety (SMD -0.64, 95% CI -0.93 to -0.35) and depression (SMD -0.46, 95% CI -0.69 to -0.22) symptoms.
Conclusions	This meta-analysis found that acupuncture can alleviate emotional symptoms in FGID patients better than pharmacotherapy. However, it is not clear whether this effect is based on the placebo effect, specific effect or nonspecific effect of acupuncture. The evidence should be proven by rigorously designed RCTs in the future.

3. Special Clinical Forms

3.1. Dyspepsia

See corresponding item

3.2. Irritable bowel syndrome

See corresponding item

3.3. Constipation

See corresponding item

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