Reviewer's report

Title: Immediate and Short-term Pain Relief by Acute Sciatic Nerve Press: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Version: 1 Date: 19 February 2007

Reviewer: Astrid Morin

Reviewer's report:

General
Review of Research Article
"Immediate and short-term pain relief by acute sciatic nerve press: a randomized controlled trial"

My overall opinion of this manuscript is that it is acceptable for publication with major essential revisions, though it is an extremely interesting topic that is new in its field.
There are a few questions left that I would like to have answered or discussed on before publication process is proceeded.

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Methods
Was a prospective power analysis performed? 2 x 33 patients, or even 2x21 + 2x12 are certainly not enough to detect a definite difference in VAS scale. But the study may be considered as an exploratory investigation. Please discuss this point!

Did patients know which one was the treatment and which one the placebo “treatment”? Do they know about Chengfu point in general? Did you tell them? – Please discuss about this!

In the method section you only mention the 10 min testing period after leg pressure, but later on you tell that pain reduction sometimes lasted longer than 30 min. Please precise, how long you tested VAS scores in all patients. If you tested 10 (or 30) minutes only, why not longer?

How did you know, how many kilograms were applied to the nerve? Please indicate!

Results
What about the results of the other time periods (30 min or longer)?

Please discuss what kind of renal disease the patients had who did not benefit of the treatment. Did they suffer a certain kind of underlying disease, for example renal colic, or was it only the amount of pain that was the cause of a treatment failure?
It is very important to discuss this extensively!

It would be extremely interesting to demonstrate the median duration of pain relieve, and visualize these results.

Discussion
This part of the discussion (line 20 of the discussion onwards) gives the impression that force was applied until pain was relieved. Was force in some cases not applied 2 min as described in the methods section, but for a shorter period of time, if pain was relieved earlier? And sometimes even longer than two minutes in case of failure?
Why was the force only 11 kg in some cases? And again, how was this measured, and was the amount of force measured in ALL cases? What is meant by “insufficient force”?
Please describe and discuss these questions in detail, and also insert your answers in the methods section of your work.

Please mention the limitation of your results because of the small number of patients.

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Abstract
Delete: the “s” in the word Abstracts
Insert: …, versus relief of 14% for the placebo press, in median.
Change: Forty percent of renal patients did not report any pain relief after the treatment.

Background
Delete: …corticosteroids lead to hypertension and psychosis.
Change: NSAIDs can cause ulcers, gastrointestinal bleeding and renal impairment.
Change: … opioids can cause among other things constipation, nausea and vomiting and sedation.
Delete: respiratory depression (this is no problem if administered correctly!)

Methods
Delete the point after “study design and procedure”

Results
Correct: two separate hospitals…
Delete the whole paragraph “After controlling for baseline pain, sex and age…”
Correct: … and 10th minute dropped
Delete the whole paragraph “After controlling for baseline pain, sex and age…”
This information is redundant with the paragraph before.
Or describe exactly what is meant with this correction and how it was performed. It makes no sense to make any correction.

Discussion
Insert: … these were all patients with intense pain before the treatment.
Correct: … works less effectively in intense pain states, or….
Correct: In our pilot study,…
Please delete the whole last paragraph: “However, pain is intended to tell us when something is wrong….”
until the end of the discussion section.

Conclusion
Delete “some” (renal diseases), because it implicates that the kind of underlying renal disease is the cause for a better or less good therapeutic success of nerve pressure. However, if you have an idea wheather sciatic nerve press works better with a certain type of renal disease, specify also in the conclusion section.

Figure 1+2: Delete the big grey column.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'