Reviewer's report

Title: Acupressure for agitation in nursing home residents with dementia: study protocol for a randomized controlled trial

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Reviewer: Shu Wang

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Agitation is prevalent among people with dementia (PWD). The researchers observe the effect of acupressure for agitation in PWD. This trial design is reasonable that can provide a higher quality of evidence than previous studies on the use of acupressure for agitation in PWD.

For this article, I have the following questions:

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. Agitation in PWD is a difficult problem to solve, but the intervention period is only 2 weeks. I think it’s short. If the time is too short not enough to reflect the treatment effect?

2. The intervention dosage of acupressure doesn’t have the amount of stimulation of specific criteria. It only says the optimal pressure is defined by experiencing the Deqi sensation (i.e. soreness, numbness, distention, heaviness). However, is the Deqi sensation begins to appear is the optimal pressure? Or with strong sense of Deqi sensation is the optimal pressure?

3. The acupressure is by manual operation. How to ensure the completely consistent of force application within the optimal pressure three minutes. If the force is not consistent, the treatment effect will inevitably be affected. Could manual operation of acupressure be changed to the machine operation?

4. The article mentioned that this trial can provide long-term efficacy evidence. However, the last observation point is 6 weeks after treatment. I don’t think it’s a enough long time for follow-up. I suggest that this trial can be extended follow-up period.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. In Figure 1 I see Trial flow chart—is the “Outcome measurements at end of 3rd, 5th, and 8th weeks”. Should it be “Outcome measurements at end of 3rd, 4th, and 8th weeks”?

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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.