
Shoulder Bursitis Treatment with Acupuncture

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Abstract : Bursa is fluid-filled sac filled with a small amount of liquid called synovial. Bursa is located in many places in the body mostly between bones and the tendons and muscles near joints. The bursa reduces friction and eases the movement between the bones, tendons and other tissues. The biggest bursas are located between tendons and bone, usually over the large joints such as shoulder, elbow, hips and knees. Bursitis is inflammation of a bursa and it can be caused by various factors such as: trauma (repetitive movements), infection, deposition of microcrystals. Acupuncture as part of the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), is very often used in the treatment of bursitis. In the research are included 30 patients, 18 male and 12 female, on age from 18 to 71, treated with acupuncture for shoulder bursitis. Acupuncture treatments were made in a clinic for TCM and acupuncture, on room temperature, with normal and fire needles, on certain trigger points - Ashi. Most of the patients needed only 1-2 treatments, expect for some patients who needed 3-4 treatments. The treatment with fire needle showed better and faster results in the treatment of shoulder bursitis.

Key words: acupuncture, treatment, traditional Chinese medicine, shoulder, bursitis

1. Introduction

Shoulder bursitis or inflammation of shoulder bursa is often associated with inflammation of the tendons of the rotator cuff muscles of the shoulder. Subacromial bursa is localized between rotator cuff tendons and bone (acromion) and it is the most commonly inflamed bursa which causes shoulder pain. The causes for this condition can be repetitive motions, direct trauma, muscle weakness or poor muscle coordination, infection and etc. Shoulder bursitis commonly presents with: localized pain, swelling and redness, tenderness, pain with overhead activities, pain while sleeping at night. Patient usually feel pain in the front or in the side of the shoulder and often intensifies at night. Lifting up the hand away from the body is very painful. The other movements are less affected or unaffected. Patient also may feel crepitations. For shoulder bursitis the Western Medicine suggests: icing and resting the shoulder, analgesics and NSAIDs, physical therapy and stretching, steroid

injections, surgery and/or joint replacement. [1][2][3][4]

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the body is covered by a network of acupuncture meridians. Qi (vital energy) and blood circulate in the body through meridians, connecting internal organs with external organs or tissues. When there is a blockage in the meridian patient is experiencing pain. Acupuncture as part of TCM is used very often in the treatment of shoulder bursitis and can effectively relieve the pain. The treatment is much safer than anti-inflammatory drugs or injections of steroids. The acupuncture treatment is used to reduce the inflammation, remove the Qi and blood stasis, relieve rigidity of muscles and stop the pain. [5][6][7]

2. Material and methods

In this article is shown a group of 30 patients, 18 male and 12 female, on age from 18 to 71, all with shoulder bursitis. All patients were treated with acupuncture, with cold, fire or combined with cold and fire needle. Acupuncture treatments were made in a clinic for TCM and acupuncture in Skopje, Macedonia by a doctor specialist in acupuncture, on a room temperature, with normal (cold) or/and fire needles. Most of the patients needed only 1-2 treatments, expect for some patients who needed 3-4 treatments. In all patients were used certain trigger points – Ashi, located on the most painful places in the area of the shoulder.

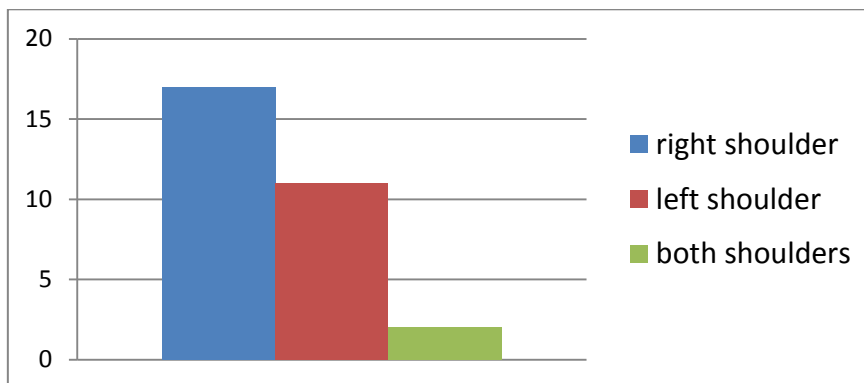
3. Results

All of the treated patients before coming to the clinic had pain in the shoulder. Other symptoms were: pain with overhead activities, pain while sleeping at night, limited movements and etc. Most of the patients said that the pain was worsened by certain movements, tiredness, activity and hard work. Of the treated patients 18 were male and 12 female. However, according to the studies women suffer from shoulder bursitis more often than men. [8] [9]

According to which shoulder is affected, most of the patients had pain in the right shoulder - 17

patients, 11 patients in the left shoulder and 2 patients in both shoulders.

Table.1. Differentiation by which shoulder is affected



According to the age, the most common age group was from 50 to 60 years. There were two patients in the group from 10 to 20 years, also two patients in the group from 20 to 30 years, five patients in the 30 to 40 years age group, 8 patients in the group from 40 to 50 years, two patients in the group from 60 to 70 years and only one patient in the group of more than 70 years. The results from the age groups are shown on table 2.

Table.2. Age groups

| Age | Number of patients |
|-------|--------------------|
| 10-20 | 2 |
| 20-30 | 2 |
| 30-40 | 5 |
| 40-50 | 8 |
| 50-60 | 10 |
| 60-70 | 2 |
| >70 | 1 |

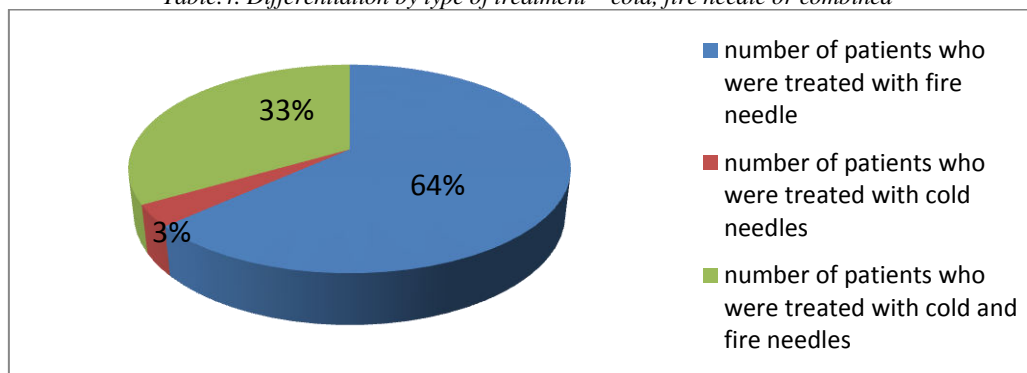
According to the number of therapies, most of the patients have made only one therapy - 12 patients, 11 patients have made two therapies, 6 patients have made three therapies and only 1 patient have made four therapies. The results from the number of the therapies are shown on table 3.

Table.3. Number of therapies done

| number of therapies | number of patients |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 12 |
| 2 | 11 |
| 3 | 6 |
| 4 | 1 |

According to how shoulder bursitis was treated, with cold needles or with fire needle, there were 19 patients treated with fire needle (64%), one patient was treated with cold needles (3%) and 10 patients had treatments with cold and with fire needles (33%).

Table.4. Differentiation by type of treatment – cold, fire needle or combined



4. Discussion

Acupuncture has been used to treat the shoulder bursitis for a long time. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), our body is covered by every specific pathways called meridians. In these specific pathways flows life energy called Qi and

when Qi can not flow freely our body is out of balance and it results with illness. Acupuncture supports the idea that our body can be brought back to equilibrium through stimulation of acupoints on the meridians. [5][10]

The acupuncture treatment begins with the patient in supine position. With palpation we find sensitive

areas at the shoulder. These areas are the most painful points – Ashi acupoints. We can treat these points with normal or with fire needles. In the treatment of shoulder bursitis, we usually use fire needle. In fire needling treatment we heat the needle on fire and insert it into area very quickly. The fire needling is just punctured in and out. To have positive therapeutic result the needle must be extremely heated, otherwise the therapeutic results will be poor. Fire needle improves the Qi energy and microcirculation in the body, regulates the function of the Zang Fu organs and remove the pain. [11][12] The same area can be treated with cold (normal) needles. The needles are inserted into the areas with retention time 15-30 minutes. In our practice, the treatment with fire needle showed better and faster results in the treatment of shoulder bursitis.

5. Conclusion

Acupuncture as a treatment for shoulder bursitis can effectively relieve the pain, ease the stiffness and improve the physical function of the shoulder. The treatment with fire needle gives better and faster results.

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