



# In this issue

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This issue of *Acupuncture in Medicine* opens with a new, single-blinded, randomised controlled trial (RCT) by Chung *et al*, in which the effectiveness of traditional needle acupuncture, administered both with and without concurrent auricular acupuncture, and compared with allocation to a waiting list, is assessed as a potential treatment for insomnia. Both groups receiving acupuncture treatment demonstrated a lesser degree of insomnia and fatigue, fewer symptoms relating to anxiety or depression, and improved functional status, relative to the untreated control group. There appeared to be no synergistic effect of body and auricular needling, however, given that the two active acupuncture treatment groups did not significantly differ with respect to any primary or secondary outcomes. Nevertheless, this latest report adds to an ever-growing RCT-level evidence base, predominantly courtesy of this particular psychiatric research group at the University of Hong Kong,<sup>1–3</sup> who have made other recent contributions to the Journal in debating whether a positive response to acupuncture among insomniacs is predictable to some degree.<sup>4,5</sup>

Next, Jin *et al* present the findings of their functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) study of 30 healthy volunteers undergoing acupuncture at SP6 (the inspiration for this issue's cover image), in which they compare the utility of a new approach to analysis called intersubject synchronisation (ISS) against a more conventional approach using the general linear model (GLM). The bottom line is that ISS was better able to examine relatively more sustained effects of acupuncture and also revealed additional clusters of activation that GLM analysis failed to detect, suggesting that this method is worthy of consideration, and further validation, by future fMRI studies. This

paper is followed by another technological evaluation of acupuncture technique by Tang *et al*, in which three-dimensional motion video analysis is used to describe the characteristics of different types of traditional needle manipulations (namely 'lifting-thrusting', 'reinforcing' and 'attenuating'), translated into the movements of the various finger joints, among both teachers and students of acupuncture. While the clinical impact of variable needle manipulation style remains unknown, there is indeed some evidence of a differential effect on specific biophysical parameters,<sup>6</sup> and the authors argue that motion-tracking technology may play a future role in traditional acupuncture education.

Elsewhere in this issue, we have three interesting preclinical papers and a review. Tian *et al* take a neurophysiological approach to the study of acupuncture's metabolic effects in rats with streptozotocin-induced diabetes mellitus, by comparing the impact of electroacupuncture (EA) at BL15, BL23 and *Weiwanshi*, which are located in the T5, L2 and T8 myotomes, respectively. Needling in the two thoracic segments, but not at BL23 (or a sham acupuncture point on the tail), differentially affected blood levels of glucose, insulin, triglycerides and (total and low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol over a 4 week time period. Next, Zhou *et al* demonstrate that EA inhibits subchondral bone loss in an ovariectomy-induced rat model of osteoarthritis and implicate regulation of nuclear factor kappa-B ligand and osteoprotegerin, and inhibition of matrix metalloproteinase-13, in the underlying mechanism of action. Thereafter, dos Anjos-Ramos *et al* assess the potential role of EA-induced alterations of gastric motility in the clearance of the intestinal parasite *Strongyloides venezuelensis* in rats deliberately infected and then treated at ST36 and CV12. EA impacted transit times and increased the number of eggs per gram of rat faeces, suggesting it could have a potentially adjunctive role to conventional antiparasitic therapies. Finally, Chen *et al* contribute an interesting review of the potential uses of acupuncture in the treatment of food

addiction/obesity, in which they draw a number of parallels with other forms of addiction and highlight the key historical aspects of acupuncture's emerging role in the field.

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