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Ear-acupressure for allergic rhinitis: a systematic review

C.S. Zhang, A.W. Yang ... [See all authors >](#)

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✉ Charlie Changli Xue, WHO Collaborating Centre for Traditional Medicine, RMIT University, PO Box 71, Plenty Road, Bundoora, Vic. 3083, Australia. Tel.: 61-3-9925 7745; fax: 61-3-9925 7178; e-mail: charlie.xue@rmit.edu.au

Abstract

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Background: Allergic rhinitis affects 10–40% of the population globally with a substantial health and economic impact on the community.

Objective of review: To assess the effectiveness and safety of ear-acupuncture or ear-acupressure for the treatment of allergic rhinitis by reviewing randomised controlled trials and quasi-randomised controlled trials.

Type of review: This review followed the methods specified in the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions.

Search strategy: A total of 21 electronic English and Chinese databases were searched from their respective inceptions to April

2008. Key words used in the search included the combination of ear, auricular, acupuncture, acupressure, acupoint, allergic, allergy, rhinitis, hayfever, randomised clinical trial and their synonyms.

Evaluation method: The methodological quality was assessed using Jadad's scale. The effect size analysis was performed to explore the difference between interventional groups.

Results: Ninety-two research papers were identified and seven of them referring to five studies met the inclusion criteria. All included studies involved ear-acupressure treatment. These studies mentioned randomisation, but no details were given. None of the five studies used blinding or intention-to-treat analysis. Ear-acupressure was more effective than herbal medicine, as effective as body acupuncture or antihistamine for short-term effect, but it was more effective than anti-histamine for long-term effect.

Conclusions: The benefit of ear-acupressure for symptomatic relief of allergic rhinitis is unknown due to the poor quality of included studies.