

## Original paper

### Validation of a simplified sham acupuncture technique for its use in clinical research: a randomised, single blind, crossover study

Marcelo Kreiner<sup>1</sup>, Ana Zaffaroni<sup>1</sup>, Ramón Alvarez<sup>2</sup>, Glenn Clark<sup>3</sup>

#### Author Affiliations

<sup>1</sup>Department of General and Oral Physiology, Universidad de la República, School of Dentistry, Montevideo, Uruguay

<sup>2</sup>Statistics Institute (IESTA), Universidad de la República, Montevideo, Uruguay

<sup>3</sup>Orofacial Pain and Oral Medicine Program, University of Southern California, USA

#### Correspondence to

Dr Marcelo Kreiner, Department of General and Oral Physiology, Universidad de la República, School of Dentistry, Ramón Masini 3381, Montevideo 11300, Uruguay; [mkreiner@netgate.com.uy](mailto:mkreiner@netgate.com.uy)

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## Abstract

**Objectives** The validity of a new sham acupuncture technique was tested on acupuncture naïve healthy subjects.

**Methods** The procedure was tested in accupoints LI4 and ST6 in a randomised, single blind and crossover study. The participants were blind to which technique they received. 32 healthy volunteers (15 men, 17 women, aged between 20 and 62 years, mean age 34 years) were recruited at the Universidad de la República, Uruguay. Interventions Participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups: (1) real acupuncture or (2) sham acupuncture. After 30 min, the patients were 'needled' again in a crossover design. Main outcome measures A yes/no questionnaire was used to assess the credibility and characteristics of the procedure.

**Results** For the credibility question (do you think you received real acupuncture?) no statistically significant group differences were evident before or after the crossover. Subjects who answered yes to this question ranged from 14/16 (87.5%) before crossover to 10/16 (62.5%) after crossover for the sham and 12/16 (75%) before crossover to 15/16 (93.8%) after crossover for the real acupuncture. The question that showed a significant difference (only after crossover) was the question, "did you feel the needle penetrating the skin?"; after crossover 12/16 (75%) subjects in the real acupuncture group said yes and 2/16 (12%) subjects in the sham group said yes to this question ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Conclusions** These data suggests that this method is credible and constitutes a simple and inexpensive technique for use as a control in clinical research in acupuncture naïve subjects.



### Articles citing this article

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*Acupuncture in Medicine* 2011;29:3 173-179

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**A pilot study of ST36 acupuncture for infantile colic**

*Acupuncture in Medicine* 2011;29:2 103-107

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