

BMJ Open

Acupuncture for postoperative pain in laparoscopic surgery: a systematic review protocol

Journal:	<i>BMJ Open</i>
Manuscript ID:	bmjopen-2014-006750
Article Type:	Protocol
Date Submitted by the Author:	30-Sep-2014
Complete List of Authors:	Lee, Seunghoon; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine Park, Jimin; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine Kim, Jihye; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine Kang, Jung Won; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine Choi, Do-Young; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine Park, Sun Jin; Kyung Hee University School of Medicine, Dept. of Surgery Nam, Dongwoo; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine Lee, Jae Dong; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine
Primary Subject Heading:	Complementary medicine
Secondary Subject Heading:	Anaesthesia, Surgery
Keywords:	Pain management < ANAESTHETICS, COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE, SURGERY

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Manuscripts

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4 **Acupuncture for postoperative pain in laparoscopic surgery: a**
5 **systematic review protocol**
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10 Seunghoon Lee¹, Jimin Park¹, Jihye Kim¹, Jung Won Kang¹, Do-Young Choi¹, Sun Jin Park², Dongwoo Nam¹
11 and Jae-Dong Lee¹
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16 Correspondence to

17 Jae-Dong Lee; ljdacu@gmail.com
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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This review aims to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of acupuncture for patients with postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery.

Methods and analysis: We will search the following databases from their inception to July 2014: MEDLINE, EMBASE, the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL), the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), the Allied and Complementary Medicine Database (AMED), three Chinese databases (China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the Chongqing VIP Chinese Science and Technology Periodical Database (VIP) and the Wanfang database), one Japanese database (Japan Science and Technology Information Aggregator, Electronic (J-STAGE)) and eight Korean databases (Korean Association of Medical Journal Edition, Korean Medical Database, Korean Studies Information Service System, National Discovery for Science Leaders, Database Periodical Information Academic, Korean National Assembly Digital Library, Oriental Medicine Advanced Searching Integrated System and Korean Traditional Knowledge Portal). All randomised controlled trials of acupuncture for postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery will be considered for inclusion. The risk of bias and reporting quality will be assessed using the Cochrane risk of bias tool, the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) and the revised STAndards for Reporting Interventions in Clinical Trials of Acupuncture (STRICTA). The risk ratio for dichotomous data and mean difference or standard mean difference for continuous data will be calculated with 95% confidence intervals.

Dissemination: The results of this review will be disseminated through peer-reviewed publication or conference presentation. Our findings will summarize the current evidence of acupuncture to treat postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery, and may provide important guidance for acupuncture usage after laparoscopic surgery for clinicians and patients.

Trial registration number: PROSPERO 2014: CRD42014010825.

Strengths and limitations of this study

- To our knowledge, this will be the first systematic review to assess the effectiveness and safety of acupuncture for patients with postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery.
- The trial selection, data extraction and assessment of risk of bias and reporting quality will be conducted independently by three review authors.
- The risk of bias and the reporting quality might be poor in small studies with high heterogeneity, which might limit the quality of evidence.

INTRODUCTION

Description of the condition

Laparoscopic surgery is a specialized technique that allows a surgeon to examine the inside of an abdomen or a pelvis using a miniature video camera through small incisions in the skin.¹ Although advantageous for reducing postoperative pain over traditional open surgery, as well as for a shorter hospital stay, faster recovery time and reduced scarring, laparoscopic surgery still results in substantial postoperative pain.²

Description of the intervention

Acupuncture is defined as an intervention that stimulates acupuncture points using needles with various manipulations to achieve balance of Qi, which is known as a 'natural energy' that forms part of any living thing.^{3,4} Acupuncture has been widely used for various forms of musculoskeletal pain in eastern Asian countries, and its effectiveness against chronic pain has been supported by rigorous testing.⁵ Recently, as an adjuvant therapy to conventional anesthetics after surgery, acupuncture has been used for reducing postoperative pain and analgesic consumption. Some systematic reviews (SRs) reported that acupuncture has an analgesic effect after various types of surgery.^{6,7}

How the intervention might work

The mechanism of acupuncture analgesia for postoperative pain remains unclear. Some studies proposed mechanisms of acupuncture through local vasodilation and circulation,^{8,9} segmental analgesia based on the gate-control theory of pain,⁸ descending inhibitory pain control by serotonin and noradrenaline,¹⁰ and the release of opioid peptides including β -endorphins, enkephalins, and dynorphins.¹¹

Why it is important to perform this review

Laparoscopic surgery is widely used, and its use is increasing; laparoscopic cholecystectomy is considered the "gold standard" treatment option for cholelithiasis.¹² The amount and duration of opioid consumption after laparoscopic surgery are significantly less than after open surgery.¹³ However, adverse events (e.g. nausea/vomiting, pruritus, urinary retention or sedation) induced by opioid analgesics including morphine, meperidine, hydromorphone or fentanyl still frequently bother patients who have undergone laparoscopic surgery and delay hospital discharge.^{14,15} Moreover, some studies reported that only 60% of patients were satisfied with postoperative pain control¹⁶ and about 30-40% of discharged patients suffered from moderate to severe pain after laparoscopic surgery.¹⁵

Therefore, it is worth evaluating whether acupuncture, which is known to be safe and also to have analgesic effects, really reduces postoperative pain and opioid consumption after laparoscopic surgery.

OBJECTIVES

This study aims to review the evidence for effectiveness and safety of acupuncture for postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery.

METHODS

Study registration

The protocol of review methods has been registered prospectively (CRD42014010825; [http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/ PROSPERO](http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO)).

Criteria for including studies in this review

Types of studies

Randomised controlled trials (RCTs) of acupuncture treatment for postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery will be included for review. Non-randomised controlled trials, uncontrolled clinical trials (e.g. case studies) and qualitative studies will be excluded. We will not restrict study eligibility according to language or publication.

Types of participants

All patients undergoing any kind of laparoscopic surgery will be included. When trials also included patients who received other surgeries (e.g. abdominal open surgery, hemorrhoidectomy or dental surgery) as well as laparoscopic surgery, we will analyse only the data from the laparoscopic surgery.

Types of interventions

Acupuncture treatment using needling with various types of stimulation (e.g. manual, electro- or warm acupuncture) on specific points (e.g. traditional acupuncture points or tender points including incision regions) will be included. However, we will not include trials in which non-penetrating stimulation on specific points (e.g. acupressure, magnets, moxibustion, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation or laser therapy) was used.

For control intervention, we will consider no treatment/waiting list, placebo/sham acupuncture, and active treatment (e.g. central regional opioid analgesia, patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) with

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4 systemic opioids and peripheral regional analgesic techniques including local anesthetic infiltration).¹⁷
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6 However, trials in which acupuncture was compared with other forms of acupuncture or herbal
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8 medicine will be excluded. When the acupuncture group received acupuncture and active treatment
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10 simultaneously, we will include only trials in which the same active treatment was administered to the
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12 acupuncture and control groups.

13 14 ***Types of outcome measures***

15 *Primary outcomes*

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17 1. Pain: relevant overall postoperative pain using any scale (e.g. visual analogue scale (VAS)
18 (0-100 mm or 0-10 cm) or numerical rating scale (NRS)) will be analysed. If pain at various
19 sites is reported separately, we will classify and analyse the pain according to following three
20 groups: (1) Parietal pain caused by skin incision (somatic pain); (2) deep intra-abdominal
21 pain originating from internal organs (visceral pain); (3) shoulder pain due to phrenic nerve
22 irritation (presumably referred visceral pain).^{18,19}
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27 2. Analgesic consumption
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30 *Secondary outcomes*

- 31 1. Opioid-related side effects (e.g nausea, vomiting, dizziness or pruritus)
- 32 2. Quality of life (QoL): assessed using a validated scales (e.g. 36-item Short-Form (SF-36) or
33 Euro-QoL)
- 34 3. Duration of hospital stay
- 35 4. Time to return to normal activity
- 36 5. Adverse events related to acupuncture treatment
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43 **Search methods for identification of studies**

44 *Electronics searches*

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46 The following 17 databases will be searched from inception to July 2014: MEDLINE (1946 to July
47 Week 4 2014), EMBASE (1980 to July 4 2014), the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials
48 (*The Cochrane Library*, 2014 Issue 7), the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature
49 (CINAHL, 1982 to July 2014), the Allied and Complementary Medicine Database (AMED, 1985 to
50 July 2014), three Chinese databases (China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the
51 Chongqing VIP Chinese Science and Technology Periodical Database (VIP) and the Wanfang
52 database), one Japanese database (Japan Science and Technology Information Aggregator, Electronic
53 (J-STAGE)) and eight Korean databases (Korean Association of Medical Journal Edition (KAMJE),
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4 Korean Medical Database (KMBASE), Korean Studies Information Service System (KISS), National
5 Discovery for Science Leaders (NDSL), Database Periodical Information Academic (DBpia), Korean
6 National Assembly Digital Library (KNADL), Oriental Medicine Advanced Searching Integrated
7 System (OASIS) and Korean Traditional Knowledge Portal (KTKP)). The WHO International
8 Clinical Trials Registry Platform (ICTRP) will also be searched for ongoing and recently completed
9 studies. The search terms consisted of three parts: laparoscopy (e.g. laparoscopy, coeloscopy or
10 video-assisted surgery), pain (e.g. pain, analgesia or discomfort), and acupuncture (e.g. acupuncture,
11 electoracupuncture or auriculoacupuncture). The detailed search strategies for MEDLINE are
12 presented in online supplementary appendix 1.
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20 ***Searching other resources***

21 Bibliographic references in relevant publications (e.g. anesthesiology & pain medicine textbooks,
22 other review articles, and included clinical trials) will be manually searched to avoid missing eligible
23 trials.
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28 **Data collection and analysis**

29 ***Selection of studies***

30 Three review authors (S Lee, J Park and J Kim) will independently screen the titles and abstracts for
31 potentially eligible studies identified by the searches. The authors will independently select and record
32 their decisions on a standard eligibility form. If disagreements about the inclusion of a study cannot be
33 resolved through discussion, the arbiter (JD Lee) will make the final decision.
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40 ***Data extraction and management***

41 Three review authors (S Lee, J Park and J Kim) will independently extract data using a standard data
42 extraction form (e.g. author, year of publication, country, study design, participants, condition, type of
43 analgesics, acupuncture intervention, control intervention, outcome measures, main results and
44 adverse events) after reading the full text of each article. Any disagreement regarding extracted data
45 will be resolved by discussion or consultation among the reviewers. When the data are insufficient or
46 ambiguous, we will contact the original study authors through e-mail or telephone to request
47 additional information.
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54 ***Assessment of risk of bias and reporting quality in included studies***

55 Three review authors (S Lee, J Kim and J Park) will independently evaluate the risk of bias based on
56 the Cochrane Collaboration's tool for assessing risk of bias of the included trials. The following
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4 domains will be assessed: (1) sequence generation; (2) allocation concealment; (3) blinding of
5 participants; (4) blinding of outcome assessors; (5) incomplete outcome data; (6) selective outcome
6 reporting; (7) other sources of bias (having factors that are likely to influence on results: a) early
7 cessation of trial due to apparent benefit or harm and b) extreme baseline imbalance of age,
8 comorbidity, duration of surgery, physical status or severity of condition before surgery). The risk of
9 bias will be categorised into three levels: low, high, and unclear risk of bias. Quality of reporting will
10 be evaluated using the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT)²⁰ and the revised
11 Standards for Reporting Interventions in Clinical Trials of Acupuncture (STRICTA).²¹ The quality of
12 reporting will be assessed using 'Y' or 'N': 'Y' means the study reported the domains of CONSORT
13 and STRICTA adequately; 'N' means the study did not report these domains adequately.²² Any
14 disagreement will be resolved through discussion or consultation among the reviewers.
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24 ***Measures of treatment effect***

25 For continuous data, we will use the mean difference (MD), if the same methods or scales were used
26 to measure the same outcome variable; if methods or scales were not the same, we will use the
27 standardised mean difference (SMD) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). For dichotomous data, we
28 will use the risk ratio (RR) to measure the treatment effect with 95% CIs. For ordinal data, we will
29 convert the ordinal outcomes to dichotomous outcomes when the data needs to be pooled.
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35 ***Unit of analysis issues***

36 When unit of analyses issues arise in studies that assessed pain repeatedly (at more than one time
37 point), we will categorise the assessments into five different measurement points after laparoscopic
38 surgery: (1) 4 hours, (2) 8 hours, (3) 24 hours, (4) up to 48 hours and (5) more than 48 hours.
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43 ***Dealing with missing data***

44 Whenever possible, we will contact the original study authors to request the missing data. If the
45 additional data cannot be obtained, we will analyse only the available data, and address the potential
46 impact of the missing data in the discussion.
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51 ***Assessment of heterogeneity***

52 Heterogeneity among the included studies will be assessed by visual inspection of the forest plot and a
53 chi-square test with a significance level of $p < .10$. I^2 statistic will be calculated to quantify the
54 inconsistencies among the included studies with a value of more than 50%, indicating a meaningful
55 heterogeneity. Heterogeneity of 0% to 40% might not be important, 30% to 60% may be moderate, 50%
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4 to 90% may be substantial and 75% to 100% may be considerable heterogeneity.²³
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7 *Assessment of reporting biases*

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9 When more than 10 studies are available, we will use visual asymmetry on a funnel plot to detect
10 reporting bias,²⁴ and Egger's regression test will be used to determine funnel plot asymmetry.²⁵
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13 *Data synthesis*

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15 We will perform the meta-analysis using Review Manager software (RevMan, version 5.3 for
16 Windows; the Nordic Cochrane Centre, Copenhagen, Denmark). A random effects model with 95 %
17 CIs will be used in the calculation of the pooled treatment-effect estimates, since substantial
18 heterogeneity is expected among studies that will be included in this review. We will not attempt
19 meta-analysis if considerable heterogeneity ($I^2 > 75\%$) cannot be explained by the clinical and
20 methodological diversity.²⁴ When trials have more than two acupuncture groups with different
21 stimulation styles (e.g. high or low electrical stimulation) or points (e.g. local or distal acupuncture
22 points), meta-analysis will be conducted in careful consideration of each group. In our trial, we will
23 combine the data of the acupuncture groups and compare the merged acupuncture group with the
24 control.²⁶ In this case, we will also perform a sensitivity analysis in which each acupuncture group
25 will be compared individually with control groups, divided roughly into equal halves to avoid double
26 counting of data in the control group in the meta-analysis.
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38 *Subgroup analysis and investigation of heterogeneity*

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40 When sufficient numbers of studies are available, subgroup analysis will be conducted to interpret the
41 heterogeneity among studies according to the following:
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- 43 1. Type of acupuncture treatment (e.g. manual acupuncture, electroacupuncture or ear
44 acupuncture)
- 45 2. Timing of acupuncture treatment (e.g. before surgery, during surgery, after surgery or
46 combination)
- 47 3. Type of control (e.g. no treatment/waitlist, placebo/sham acupuncture, active treatment or
48 add-on effect for active control)
- 49 4. Duration of follow-up (4, 8, 24, up to or more than 48 hours).
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55 *Sensitivity analysis*

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57 When sufficient numbers of studies are available, sensitivity analysis will be performed to identify
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whether the results are robust in the review according to the following:

1. Methodological qualities (e.g. whether sequence generation and allocation concealment are adequately conducted or not)
2. Sample size (e.g. less or more than 40 participants in each group)²⁷
3. Analysis issues in trials having more than two acupuncture groups (i.e. comparing the merged acupuncture group versus each acupuncture group separately with the control group in meta-analysis).

Summary of evidence

We will summarise the results of the main outcomes (primary outcomes and adverse events) in 'Summary of findings' tables. The quality of evidence in the main outcomes will be assessed using the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) approach considering the following factors: (1) limitations in the design and implementation; (2) indirectness of evidence; (3) unexplained heterogeneity or inconsistency of results; (4) imprecision of results; (5) high probability of publication bias. We will categorise the quality of evidence into four levels: high, moderate, low, and very low quality.²⁴

DISCUSSION

The object of this SR is to assess the effectiveness and safety of acupuncture treatment in postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery. Recently, two SRs of acupuncture for postoperative pain were published^{6,7}. Although the type of surgery may influence the pain site and intensity, both reviews included multiple surgery types such as abdominal, lumbar, or dental surgery as well as laparoscopic surgery.²⁸ Moreover, the definition of acupuncture used in those studies is either too broad, including multiple types of acupuncture point stimulation such as acupressure and transcutaneous electrical acupoint stimulation⁶ or too narrow, only focusing on ear acupuncture.⁷ Therefore, we will evaluate postoperative pain induced by laparoscopic surgery and define acupuncture treatment adequately as two components: (1) needling with penetration of the skin and (2) on specific points including traditional acupuncture points or painful points around the incision or shoulder region.

This SR will provide a summary of the current evidence on the effectiveness and safety of acupuncture for patients with postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery. This evidence will provide information useful to patients, practitioners, and health policy-makers who consider acupuncture a potential adjuvant therapy to conventional analgesics.

Author affiliations

1 Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine, Kyung Hee University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

2 Dept. of Surgery, Kyung Hee University School of Medicine, Seoul, South Korea

Contributors

The search strategy was developed by S Lee. S Lee, J Park and J Kim will search and select the studies. JD Lee will act as an arbiter in the selection stage. Extraction of data will be conducted by S Lee, J Park and J Kim. Assessment of risk of bias, reporting quality and quality of evidence will be performed by S Lee, J Park and J Kim. Interpretation of the analyses will be performed by all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript for publication.

Funding

This study received no specific grant from any agency.

Competing interests

None

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Online Resource 1 Search strategies*MEDLINE (Ovid Online)*

1. exp Laparoscopy/
2. exp Surgical Procedures, Minimally Invasive/
3. exp Video-Assisted Surgery/
4. (laparoscop* or coelioscop* or celioscop* or peritoneoscop* or minimally invasive or video assisted surgery).mp.
5. OR/1-4

6. exp Pain, Postoperative/
7. exp Analgesia/
8. exp Pain management/
9. exp Analgesia, Patient-controlled/
10. (pain* or analgesi* or ache* or suffering* or discomfort).mp.
11. OR/6-10

12. exp Acupuncture/
13. exp Acupuncture therapy/
14. exp Electroacupuncture/
15. exp Acupuncture points/
16. exp Meridians/
17. (acupuncture or electroacupuncture or electro-acupuncture or auriculoacupuncture or auriculo-acupuncture or dry needling or acupuncturist* or acupoint* or meridian*).mp.
18. OR/12-18

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BMJ Open

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Journal:	<i>BMJ Open</i>
Manuscript ID:	bmjopen-2014-006750.R1
Article Type:	Protocol
Date Submitted by the Author:	28-Nov-2014
Complete List of Authors:	Lee, Seunghoon; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine Park, Jimin; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine Kim, Jihye; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine Kang, Jung Won; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine Choi, Do-Young; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine Park, Sun Jin; Kyung Hee University School of Medicine, Dept. of Surgery Nam, Dongwoo; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine Lee, Jae Dong; Kyung Hee University, Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine
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11 and Jae-Dong Lee¹
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17 Correspondence to
18 Jae-Dong Lee; ljdacu@gmail.com
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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This review aims to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of acupuncture for patients with postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery.

Methods and analysis: We will search the following databases from their inception to October 2014: MEDLINE, EMBASE, the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL), the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), the Allied and Complementary Medicine Database (AMED), three Chinese databases (China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the Chongqing VIP Chinese Science and Technology Periodical Database (VIP) and the Wanfang database), one Japanese database (Japan Science and Technology Information Aggregator, Electronic (J-STAGE)) and eight Korean databases (Korean Association of Medical Journal Edition, Korean Medical Database, Korean Studies Information Service System, National Discovery for Science Leaders, Database Periodical Information Academic, Korean National Assembly Digital Library, Oriental Medicine Advanced Searching Integrated System and Korean Traditional Knowledge Portal). All randomised controlled trials of acupuncture for postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery will be considered for inclusion. The risk of bias and reporting quality will be assessed using the Cochrane risk of bias tool, the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) and the revised STAndards for Reporting Interventions in Clinical Trials of Acupuncture (STRICTA). The risk ratio for dichotomous data and mean difference or standard mean difference for continuous data will be calculated with 95% confidence intervals.

Dissemination: The results of this review will be disseminated through peer-reviewed publication or conference presentation. Our findings will summarize the current evidence of acupuncture to treat postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery, and may provide important guidance for acupuncture usage after laparoscopic surgery for clinicians and patients.

Trial registration number: PROSPERO 2014: CRD42014010825.

Strengths and limitations of this study

- To our knowledge, this will be the first systematic review to assess the effectiveness and safety of acupuncture for patients with postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery.
- The trial selection, data extraction and assessment of risk of bias and reporting quality will be conducted independently by three review authors.
- The risk of bias and the reporting quality might be poor in small studies with high heterogeneity, which might limit the quality of evidence.

INTRODUCTION

Description of the condition

Laparoscopic surgery is a specialized technique that allows a surgeon to examine the inside of an abdomen or a pelvis using a miniature video camera, known as a laparoscope, through small incisions in the skin, known as ports.^{1 2} Laparoscopic surgery has advantages over traditional open surgery in terms of reduced postoperative pain, shorter hospital stay, faster recovery time, decreased postoperative ileus, reduced scarring and preserved immune function; however, laparoscopic surgery still results in substantial postoperative pain around the incision site.^{3 4} Moreover, inflation with carbon dioxide during the surgical procedure frequently induces laparoscopy-induced shoulder pain, secondary to irritation of the phrenic nerve.⁵

Description of the intervention

Acupuncture is defined as an intervention that stimulates acupuncture points using needles with various manipulations to achieve balance of Qi, which is known as a 'natural energy' that forms part of any living thing.^{6 7} Acupuncture has been widely used for various forms of musculoskeletal pain in eastern Asian countries, and its effectiveness against chronic pain has been supported by rigorous testing.⁸ Recently, as an adjuvant therapy to conventional anesthetics after surgery, acupuncture has been used for reducing postoperative pain and analgesic consumption. Some systematic reviews (SRs) reported that acupuncture has an analgesic effect after various types of surgery.^{9 10}

How the intervention might work

The mechanism of acupuncture analgesia for postoperative pain remains unclear. Some studies proposed mechanisms of acupuncture through local vasodilation and circulation,^{11 12} segmental analgesia based on the gate-control theory of pain,¹¹ descending inhibitory pain control by serotonin and noradrenaline¹³ and the release of opioid peptides including β -endorphins, enkephalins and dynorphins.¹⁴

Why it is important to perform this review

Laparoscopic surgery is widely used, and its use is increasing; laparoscopic cholecystectomy is considered the "gold standard" treatment option for cholelithiasis.¹⁵ The amount and duration of opioid consumption after laparoscopic surgery are significantly less than after open surgery.¹⁶ However, adverse events (e.g. nausea/vomiting, pruritus, urinary retention or sedation) induced by opioid analgesics including morphine, meperidine, hydromorhine or fentanyl still frequently bother patients who have undergone laparoscopic surgery and delay hospital discharge.^{17 18} Moreover, some

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4 studies reported that only 60% of patients were satisfied with postoperative pain control¹⁹ and about
5 30-40% of discharged patients suffered from moderate to severe pain after laparoscopic surgery.¹⁸
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7 Therefore, it is worth evaluating whether acupuncture, which is known to be safe and also to have
8 analgesic effects, really reduces postoperative pain and opioid consumption after laparoscopic surgery.
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11 12 13 14 **OBJECTIVES**

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16 This study aims to review the evidence for effectiveness and safety of acupuncture for postoperative
17 pain after laparoscopic surgery.
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20 21 **METHODS**

22 **Study registration**

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24 The protocol of review methods has been registered prospectively (CRD42014010825;
25 [http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/ PROSPERO](http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO)).
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28 29 **Criteria for including studies in this review**

30 *Types of studies*

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32 Randomised controlled trials (RCTs) of acupuncture treatment for postoperative pain after
33 laparoscopic surgery will be included for review. Non-randomised controlled trials, uncontrolled
34 clinical trials (e.g. case studies) and qualitative studies will be excluded. We will not restrict study
35 eligibility according to language or publication.
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39 40 *Types of participants*

41
42 All patients undergoing any kind of laparoscopic surgery will be included. When trials also included
43 patients who received other surgeries (e.g. abdominal open surgery, hemorrhoidectomy or dental
44 surgery) as well as laparoscopic surgery, we will analyse only the data from the laparoscopic surgery.
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48 49 *Types of interventions*

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51 Acupuncture treatment using needling with various types of stimulation (e.g. manual, electro- or
52 warm acupuncture) on specific points (e.g. traditional acupuncture points or tender points including
53 incision regions) will be included. However, we will not include trials in which non-penetrating
54 stimulation on specific points (e.g. acupressure, magnets, moxibustion, transcutaneous electrical nerve
55 stimulation or laser therapy) was used.
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4 For control intervention, we will consider no treatment/waiting list, placebo/sham acupuncture, and
5 active treatment (e.g. central regional opioid analgesia, patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) with
6 systemic opioids and peripheral regional analgesic techniques including local anesthetic infiltration).²⁰
7 However, trials in which acupuncture was compared with other forms of acupuncture or herbal
8 medicine will be excluded. When the acupuncture group received acupuncture and active treatment
9 simultaneously, we will include only trials in which the same active treatment was administered to the
10 acupuncture and control groups.
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15 16 17 **Types of outcome measures**

18 *Primary outcomes*

- 19
20 1. Pain: relevant overall postoperative pain using any scale (e.g. visual analogue scale (VAS)
21 (0-100 mm or 0-10 cm) or numerical rating scale (NRS)) will be analysed. If pain at various
22 sites is reported separately, we will classify and analyse the pain according to following three
23 groups: (1) Parietal pain caused by skin incision (somatic pain); (2) deep intra-abdominal
24 pain originating from internal organs (visceral pain); (3) shoulder pain due to phrenic nerve
25 irritation (presumably referred visceral pain).^{21 22}
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- 30 2. Analgesic consumption
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33 *Secondary outcomes*

- 34 1. Opioid-related side effects (e.g nausea, vomiting, dizziness or pruritus)
- 35 2. Quality of life (QoL): assessed using a validated scales (e.g. 36-item Short-Form (SF-36) or
36 Euro-QoL)
- 37 3. Duration of hospital stay
- 38 4. Time to return to normal activity
- 39 5. Adverse events related to acupuncture treatment
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46 **Search methods for identification of studies**

47 *Electronics searches*

48 The following 17 databases will be searched from inception to October 2014: MEDLINE (1946 to
49 October Week 4 2014), EMBASE (1980 to October 4 2014), the Cochrane Central Register of
50 Controlled Trials (*The Cochrane Library*, 2014 Issue 10), the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied
51 Health Literature (CINAHL, 1982 to October 2014), the Allied and Complementary Medicine
52 Database (AMED, 1985 to October 2014), three Chinese databases (China National Knowledge
53 Infrastructure (CNKI), the Chongqing VIP Chinese Science and Technology Periodical Database
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4 (VIP) and the Wanfang database), one Japanese database (Japan Science and Technology Information
5 Aggregator, Electronic (J-STAGE)) and eight Korean databases (Korean Association of Medical
6 Journal Edition (KAMJE), Korean Medical Database (KMBASE), Korean Studies Information
7 Service System (KISS), National Discovery for Science Leaders (NDSL), Database Periodical
8 Information Academic (DBpia), Korean National Assembly Digital Library (KNADL), Oriental
9 Medicine Advanced Searching Integrated System (OASIS) and Korean Traditional Knowledge Portal
10 (KTKP)). The WHO International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (ICTRP) will also be searched for
11 ongoing and recently completed studies. The search terms consisted of three parts: laparoscopy (e.g.
12 laparoscopy, coelioscopy or video-assisted surgery), pain (e.g. pain, analgesia or discomfort), and
13 acupuncture (e.g. acupuncture, electoracupuncture or auriculoacupuncture). The detailed search
14 strategies for MEDLINE are presented in online supplementary appendix 1.
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22 ***Searching other resources***

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24 Bibliographic references in relevant publications (e.g. anesthesiology & pain medicine textbooks,
25 other review articles, and included clinical trials) will be manually searched to avoid missing eligible
26 trials.
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30 **Data collection and analysis**

31 ***Selection of studies***

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33 Three review authors (S Lee, J Park and J Kim) will independently screen the titles and abstracts for
34 potentially eligible studies identified by the searches. The authors will independently select and record
35 their decisions on a standard eligibility form. If disagreements about the inclusion of a study cannot be
36 resolved through discussion, the arbiter (JD Lee) will make the final decision.
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43 ***Data extraction and management***

44
45 Three review authors (S Lee, J Park and J Kim) will independently extract data using a standard data
46 extraction form (e.g. author, year of publication, country, study design, participants, condition, type of
47 analgesics, acupuncture intervention, control intervention, outcome measures, main results and
48 adverse events) after reading the full text of each article. Any disagreement regarding extracted data
49 will be resolved by discussion or consultation among the reviewers. When the data are insufficient or
50 ambiguous, we will contact the original study authors through e-mail or telephone to request
51 additional information.
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56 ***Assessment of risk of bias and reporting quality in included studies***

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4 Three review authors (S Lee, J Kim, and J Park) will independently evaluate the risk of bias based on
5 the Cochrane Collaboration's tool for assessing risk of bias of the included trials. The following
6 domains will be assessed: (1) sequence generation; (2) allocation concealment; (3) blinding of
7 participants; (4) blinding of outcome assessors; (5) incomplete outcome data; (6) selective outcome
8 reporting; (7) other sources of bias (having factors that are likely to influence on results: a) early
9 cessation of trial due to apparent benefit or harm and b) extreme baseline imbalance of age,
10 comorbidity, duration of surgery, physical status or severity of condition before surgery). The risk of
11 bias will be categorised into three levels: low, high, and unclear risk of bias. Quality of reporting will
12 be evaluated using the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT)²³ and the revised
13 Standards for Reporting Interventions in Clinical Trials of Acupuncture (STRICTA).²⁴ The quality of
14 reporting will be assessed using 'Y' or 'N': 'Y' means the study reported the domains of CONSORT
15 and STRICTA adequately; 'N' means the study did not report these domains adequately.²⁵ Any
16 disagreement will be resolved through discussion or consultation among the reviewers.
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27 *Measures of treatment effect*

28 For continuous data, we will use the mean difference (MD), if the same methods or scales were used
29 to measure the same outcome variable; if methods or scales were not the same, we will use the
30 standardised mean difference (SMD) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). For dichotomous data, we
31 will use the risk ratio (RR) to measure the treatment effect with 95% CIs. For ordinal data, we will
32 convert the ordinal outcomes to dichotomous outcomes when the data needs to be pooled.
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38 *Unit of analysis issues*

39 When unit of analyses issues arise in studies that assessed pain repeatedly (at more than one time
40 point), we will categorise the assessments into five different measurement points after laparoscopic
41 surgery: (1) 4 hours, (2) 8 hours, (3) 24 hours, (4) up to 48 hours and (5) more than 48 hours.
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46 *Dealing with missing data*

47 Whenever possible, we will contact the original study authors to request the missing data. If the
48 additional data cannot be obtained, we will analyse only the available data, and address the potential
49 impact of the missing data in the discussion.
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54 *Assessment of heterogeneity*

55 Heterogeneity among the included studies will be assessed by visual inspection of the forest plot and a
56 chi-square test with a significance level of $p < .10$. I^2 statistic will be calculated to quantify the
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4 inconsistencies among the included studies with a value of more than 50%, indicating a meaningful
5 heterogeneity. Heterogeneity of 0% to 40% might not be important, 30% to 60% may be moderate, 50%
6 to 90% may be substantial and 75% to 100% may be considerable heterogeneity.²⁶
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10 *Assessment of reporting biases*

11 When more than 10 studies are available, we will use visual asymmetry on a funnel plot to detect
12 reporting bias,²⁷ and Egger's regression test will be used to determine funnel plot asymmetry.²⁸
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16 *Data synthesis*

17 We will perform the meta-analysis using Review Manager software (RevMan, version 5.3 for
18 Windows; the Nordic Cochrane Centre, Copenhagen, Denmark). A random effects model with 95 %
19 CIs will be used in the calculation of the pooled treatment-effect estimates, since substantial
20 heterogeneity is expected among studies that will be included in this review. We will not attempt
21 meta-analysis if considerable heterogeneity ($I^2 > 75\%$) cannot be explained by the clinical and
22 methodological diversity.²⁷ When trials have more than two acupuncture groups with different
23 stimulation styles (e.g. high or low electrical stimulation) or points (e.g. local or distal acupuncture
24 points), meta-analysis will be conducted in careful consideration of each groups. In our trial, we will
25 combine the data of the acupuncture groups and compare the merged acupuncture group with the
26 control.²⁹ In this case, we will also perform a sensitivity analysis in which each acupuncture group
27 will be compared individually with control groups, divided roughly into equal halves to avoid double
28 counting of data in the control group in the meta-analysis.
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41 *Subgroup analysis and investigation of heterogeneity*

42 When sufficient numbers of studies are available, subgroup analysis will be conducted to interpret the
43 heterogeneity among studies according to the following:
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- 46 1. Type of acupuncture treatment (e.g. manual acupuncture, electroacupuncture or ear
47 acupuncture)
- 48 2. Timing of acupuncture treatment (e.g. before surgery, during surgery, after surgery or
49 combination)
- 50 3. Type of control (e.g. no treatment/waitlist, placebo/sham acupuncture, active treatment or
51 add-on effect for active control)
- 52 4. Duration of follow-up (4, 8, 24, up to or more than 48 hours).
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Sensitivity analysis

When sufficient numbers of studies are available, sensitivity analysis will be performed to identify whether the results are robust in the review according to the following:

1. Methodological qualities (e.g. whether sequence generation and allocation concealment are adequately conducted or not)
2. Sample size (e.g. less or more than 40 participants in each group)³⁰
3. Analysis issues in trials having more than two acupuncture groups (i.e. comparing the merged acupuncture group versus each acupuncture group separately with the control group in meta-analysis).

Summary of evidence

We will summarise the results of the main outcomes (primary outcomes and adverse events) in 'Summary of findings' tables. The quality of evidence in the main outcomes will be assessed using the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) approach considering the following factors: (1) limitations in the design and implementation; (2) indirectness of evidence; (3) unexplained heterogeneity or inconsistency of results; (4) imprecision of results; (5) high probability of publication bias. We will categorise the quality of evidence into four levels: high, moderate, low, and very low quality.²⁷

DISCUSSION

The object of this SR is to assess the effectiveness and safety of acupuncture treatment in postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery. Recently, two SRs of acupuncture for postoperative pain were published^{9,10}. Although the type of surgery may influence the pain site and intensity, both reviews included multiple surgery types such as abdominal, lumbar or dental surgery as well as laparoscopic surgery.³¹ Moreover, the definition of acupuncture used in those studies is either too broad, including multiple types of acupuncture point stimulation such as acupressure and transcutaneous electrical acupoint stimulation⁹ or too narrow, only focusing on ear acupuncture.¹⁰ Therefore, we will evaluate postoperative pain induced by laparoscopic surgery and define acupuncture treatment adequately as two components: (1) needling with penetration of the skin and (2) on specific points including traditional acupuncture points or painful points around the incision or shoulder region.

This SR will provide a summary of the current evidence on the effectiveness and safety of acupuncture for patients with postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery. This evidence will provide information useful to patients, practitioners and health policy-makers who consider acupuncture a potential adjuvant therapy to conventional analgesics.

Author affiliations

1 Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine, Kyung Hee University, Seoul, South Korea

2 Dept. of Surgery, Kyung Hee University School of Medicine, Seoul, South Korea

Contributors

The search strategy was developed by S Lee. S Lee, J Park and J Kim will search and select the studies. JD Lee will act as an arbiter in the selection stage. Extraction of data will be conducted by S Lee, J Park and J Kim. Assessment of risk of bias, reporting quality and quality of evidence will be performed by S Lee, J Park and J Kim. Interpretation of the analyses will be performed by all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript for publication.

Funding

This study received no specific grant from any agency.

Competing interests

None

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For peer review only

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8 **Acupuncture for postoperative pain in laparoscopic surgery: a**
9 **systematic review protocol**
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12 Seunghoon Lee¹, Jimin Park¹, Jihye Kim¹, Jung Won Kang¹, Do-Young Choi¹, Sun Jin Park², Dongwoo Nam¹
13 and Jae-Dong Lee¹
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19 Correspondence to
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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This review aims to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of acupuncture for patients with postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery.

Methods and analysis: We will search the following databases from their inception to ~~July~~October 2014: MEDLINE, EMBASE, the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL), the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), the Allied and Complementary Medicine Database (AMED), three Chinese databases (China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the Chongqing VIP Chinese Science and Technology Periodical Database (VIP) and the Wanfang database), one Japanese database (Japan Science and Technology Information Aggregator, Electronic (J-STAGE)) and eight Korean databases (Korean Association of Medical Journal Edition, Korean Medical Database, Korean Studies Information Service System, National Discovery for Science Leaders, Database Periodical Information Academic, Korean National Assembly Digital Library, Oriental Medicine Advanced Searching Integrated System and Korean Traditional Knowledge Portal). All randomised controlled trials of acupuncture for postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery will be considered for inclusion. The risk of bias and reporting quality will be assessed using the Cochrane risk of bias tool, the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) and the revised STandards for Reporting Interventions in Clinical Trials of Acupuncture (STRICTA). The risk ratio for dichotomous data and mean difference or standard mean difference for continuous data will be calculated with 95% confidence intervals.

Dissemination: The results of this review will be disseminated through peer-reviewed publication or conference presentation. Our findings will summarize the current evidence of acupuncture to treat postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery, and may provide important guidance for acupuncture usage after laparoscopic surgery for clinicians and patients.

Trial registration number: PROSPERO 2014: CRD42014010825.

Strengths and limitations of this study

- To our knowledge, this will be the first systematic review to assess the effectiveness and safety of acupuncture for patients with postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery.
- The trial selection, data extraction and assessment of risk of bias and reporting quality will be conducted independently by three review authors.
- The risk of bias and the reporting quality might be poor in small studies with high heterogeneity, which might limit the quality of evidence.

INTRODUCTION

Description of the condition

Laparoscopic surgery is a specialized technique that allows a surgeon to examine the inside of an abdomen or a pelvis using a miniature video camera, known as a laparoscope, through small incisions in the skin, known as ports.^{1 2} Laparoscopic surgery has advantages over traditional open surgery in terms of reduced postoperative pain, shorter hospital stay, faster recovery time, decreased postoperative ileus, reduced scarring and preserved immune function; however, laparoscopic surgery still results in substantial postoperative pain around the incision site.^{3 4} Moreover, inflation with carbon dioxide during the surgical procedure frequently induces laparoscopy-induced shoulder pain, secondary to irritation of the phrenic nerve.⁵ ¹ Although advantageous for reducing postoperative pain over traditional open surgery, as well as for a shorter hospital stay, faster recovery time and reduced scarring, laparoscopic surgery still results in substantial postoperative pain.² -

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Description of the intervention

Acupuncture is defined as an intervention that stimulates acupuncture points using needles with various manipulations to achieve balance of Qi, which is known as a 'natural energy' that forms part of any living thing.^{6 7} Acupuncture has been widely used for various forms of musculoskeletal pain in eastern Asian countries, and its effectiveness against chronic pain has been supported by rigorous testing.⁸ Recently, as an adjuvant therapy to conventional anesthetics after surgery, acupuncture has been used for reducing postoperative pain and analgesic consumption. Some systematic reviews (SRs) reported that acupuncture has an analgesic effect after various types of surgery.^{9 10}

How the intervention might work

The mechanism of acupuncture analgesia for postoperative pain remains unclear. Some studies proposed mechanisms of acupuncture through local vasodilation and circulation,^{11 12} segmental analgesia based on the gate-control theory of pain,¹¹ descending inhibitory pain control by serotonin and noradrenaline¹³ and the release of opioid peptides including β -endorphins, enkephalins and dynorphins.¹⁴

Why it is important to perform this review

Laparoscopic surgery is widely used, and its use is increasing; laparoscopic cholecystectomy is considered the "gold standard" treatment option for cholelithiasis.¹⁵ The amount and duration of opioid consumption after laparoscopic surgery are significantly less than after open surgery.¹⁶

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11 studies reported that only 60% of patients were satisfied with postoperative pain control¹⁹ and about
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25 **METHODS**

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44 All patients undergoing any kind of laparoscopic surgery will be included. When trials also included
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51 Acupuncture treatment using needling with various types of stimulation (e.g. manual, electro- or
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incision regions) will be included. However, we will not include trials in which non-penetrating stimulation on specific points (e.g. acupressure, magnets, moxibustion, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation or laser therapy) was used.

For control intervention, we will consider no treatment/waiting list, placebo/sham acupuncture, and active treatment (e.g. central regional opioid analgesia, patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) with systemic opioids and peripheral regional analgesic techniques including local anesthetic infiltration).²⁰

However, trials in which acupuncture was compared with other forms of acupuncture or herbal medicine will be excluded. When the acupuncture group received acupuncture and active treatment simultaneously, we will include only trials in which the same active treatment was administered to the acupuncture and control groups.

Types of outcome measures

Primary outcomes

1. Pain: relevant overall postoperative pain using any scale (e.g. visual analogue scale (VAS) (0-100 mm or 0-10 cm) or numerical rating scale (NRS)) will be analysed. If pain at various sites is reported separately, we will classify and analyse the pain according to following three groups: (1) Parietal pain caused by skin incision (somatic pain); (2) deep intra-abdominal pain originating from internal organs (visceral pain); (3) shoulder pain due to phrenic nerve irritation (presumably referred visceral pain).^{21 22}
2. Analgesic consumption

Secondary outcomes

1. Opioid-related side effects (e.g nausea, vomiting, dizziness or pruritus)
2. Quality of life (QoL): assessed using a validated scales (e.g. 36-item Short-Form (SF-36) or Euro-QoL)
3. Duration of hospital stay
4. Time to return to normal activity
5. Adverse events related to acupuncture treatment

Search methods for identification of studies

Electronics searches

The following 17 databases will be searched from inception to ~~October~~July 2014: MEDLINE (1946 to ~~October~~July Week 4 2014), EMBASE (1980 to ~~October~~July 4 2014), the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (*The Cochrane Library*, 2014 Issue ~~107~~), the Cumulative Index to Nursing and

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7 Allied Health Literature (CINAHL, 1982 to ~~October~~July 2014), the Allied and Complementary
8 Medicine Database (AMED, 1985 to ~~October~~July 2014), three Chinese databases (China National
9 Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the Chongqing VIP Chinese Science and Technology Periodical
10 Database (VIP) and the Wanfang database), one Japanese database (Japan Science and Technology
11 Information Aggregator, Electronic (J-STAGE)) and eight Korean databases (Korean Association of
12 Medical Journal Edition (KAMJE), Korean Medical Database (KMBASE), Korean Studies
13 Information Service System (KISS), National Discovery for Science Leaders (NDSL), Database
14 Periodical Information Academic (DBpia), Korean National Assembly Digital Library (KNADL),
15 Oriental Medicine Advanced Searching Integrated System (OASIS) and Korean Traditional
16 Knowledge Portal (KTKP)). The WHO International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (ICTRP) will
17 also be searched for ongoing and recently completed studies. The search terms consisted of three parts:
18 laparoscopy (e.g. laparoscopy, coelioscopy or video-assisted surgery), pain (e.g. pain, analgesia or
19 discomfort), and acupuncture (e.g. acupuncture, electoracupuncture or auriculoacupuncture). The
20 detailed search strategies for MEDLINE are presented in online supplementary appendix 1.
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28 ***Searching other resources***

29 Bibliographic references in relevant publications (e.g. anesthesiology & pain medicine textbooks,
30 other review articles, and included clinical trials) will be manually searched to avoid missing eligible
31 trials.
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35 **Data collection and analysis**

36 ***Selection of studies***

37 Three review authors (S Lee, J Park and J Kim) will independently screen the titles and abstracts for
38 potentially eligible studies identified by the searches. The authors will independently select and record
39 their decisions on a standard eligibility form. If disagreements about the inclusion of a study cannot be
40 resolved through discussion, the arbiter (JD Lee) will make the final decision.
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45 ***Data extraction and management***

46 Three review authors (S Lee, J Park and J Kim) will independently extract data using a standard data
47 extraction form (e.g. author, year of publication, country, study design, participants, condition, type of
48 analgesics, acupuncture intervention, control intervention, outcome measures, main results and
49 adverse events) after reading the full text of each article. Any disagreement regarding extracted data
50 will be resolved by discussion or consultation among the reviewers. When the data are insufficient or
51 ambiguous, we will contact the original study authors through e-mail or telephone to request
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7 additional information.

10 *Assessment of risk of bias and reporting quality in included studies*

11 Three review authors (S Lee, J Kim, and J Park) will independently evaluate the risk of bias based on
12 the Cochrane Collaboration's tool for assessing risk of bias of the included trials. The following
13 domains will be assessed: (1) sequence generation; (2) allocation concealment; (3) blinding of
14 participants; (4) blinding of outcome assessors; (5) incomplete outcome data; (6) selective outcome
15 reporting; (7) other sources of bias (having factors that are likely to influence on results: a) early
16 cessation of trial due to apparent benefit or harm and b) extreme baseline imbalance of age,
17 comorbidity, duration of surgery, physical status or severity of condition before surgery). The risk of
18 bias will be categorised into three levels: low, high, and unclear risk of bias. Quality of reporting will
19 be evaluated using the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT)²³ and the revised
20 Standards for Reporting Interventions in Clinical Trials of Acupuncture (STRICTA).²⁴ The quality of
21 reporting will be assessed using 'Y' or 'N': 'Y' means the study reported the domains of CONSORT
22 and STRICTA adequately; 'N' means the study did not report these domains adequately.²⁵ Any
23 disagreement will be resolved through discussion or consultation among the reviewers.

31 *Measures of treatment effect*

32 For continuous data, we will use the mean difference (MD), if the same methods or scales were used
33 to measure the same outcome variable; if methods or scales were not the same, we will use the
34 standardised mean difference (SMD) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). For dichotomous data, we
35 will use the risk ratio (RR) to measure the treatment effect with 95% CIs. For ordinal data, we will
36 convert the ordinal outcomes to dichotomous outcomes when the data needs to be pooled.

41 *Unit of analysis issues*

42 When unit of analyses issues arise in studies that assessed pain repeatedly (at more than one time
43 point), we will categorise the assessments into five different measurement points after laparoscopic
44 surgery: (1) 4 hours, (2) 8 hours, (3) 24 hours, (4) up to 48 hours and (5) more than 48 hours.

48 *Dealing with missing data*

49 Whenever possible, we will contact the original study authors to request the missing data. If the
50 additional data cannot be obtained, we will analyse only the available data, and address the potential
51 impact of the missing data in the discussion.

Assessment of heterogeneity

Heterogeneity among the included studies will be assessed by visual inspection of the forest plot and a chi-square test with a significance level of $p < .10$. I^2 statistic will be calculated to quantify the inconsistencies among the included studies with a value of more than 50%, indicating a meaningful heterogeneity. Heterogeneity of 0% to 40% might not be important, 30% to 60% may be moderate, 50% to 90% may be substantial and 75% to 100% may be considerable heterogeneity.²⁶

Assessment of reporting biases

When more than 10 studies are available, we will use visual asymmetry on a funnel plot to detect reporting bias,²⁷ and Egger's regression test will be used to determine funnel plot asymmetry.²⁸

Data synthesis

We will perform the meta-analysis using Review Manager software (RevMan, version 5.3 for Windows; the Nordic Cochrane Centre, Copenhagen, Denmark). A random effects model with 95 % CIs will be used in the calculation of the pooled treatment-effect estimates, since substantial heterogeneity is expected among studies that will be included in this review. We will not attempt meta-analysis if considerable heterogeneity ($I^2 > 75\%$) cannot be explained by the clinical and methodological diversity.²⁷ When trials have more than two acupuncture groups with different stimulation styles (e.g. high or low electrical stimulation) or points (e.g. local or distal acupuncture points), meta-analysis will be conducted in careful consideration of each groups. In our trial, we will combine the data of the acupuncture groups and compare the merged acupuncture group with the control.²⁹ In this case, we will also perform a sensitivity analysis in which each acupuncture group will be compared individually with control groups, divided roughly into equal halves to avoid double counting of data in the control group in the meta-analysis.

Subgroup analysis and investigation of heterogeneity

When sufficient numbers of studies are available, subgroup analysis will be conducted to interpret the heterogeneity among studies according to the following:

1. Type of acupuncture treatment (e.g. manual acupuncture, electroacupuncture or ear acupuncture)
2. Timing of acupuncture treatment (e.g. before surgery, during surgery, after surgery or combination)
3. Type of control (e.g. no treatment/waitlist, placebo/sham acupuncture, active treatment or

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8 add-on effect for active control)

- 9 4. Duration of follow-up (4, 8, 24, up to or more than 48 hours).

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11 ***Sensitivity analysis***

12 When sufficient numbers of studies are available, sensitivity analysis will be performed to identify
13 whether the results are robust in the review according to the following:

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15 1. Methodological qualities (e.g. whether sequence generation and allocation concealment are
16 adequately conducted or not)
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18 2. Sample size (e.g. less or more than 40 participants in each group)³⁰
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20 3. Analysis issues in trials having more than two acupuncture groups (i.e. comparing the
21 merged acupuncture group versus each acupuncture group separately with the control group
22 in meta-analysis).
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26 ***Summary of evidence***

27 We will summarise the results of the main outcomes (primary outcomes and adverse events) in
28 'Summary of findings' tables. The quality of evidence in the main outcomes will be assessed using
29 the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) approach
30 considering the following factors: (1) limitations in the design and implementation; (2) indirectness of
31 evidence; (3) unexplained heterogeneity or inconsistency of results; (4) imprecision of results; (5)
32 high probability of publication bias. We will categorise the quality of evidence into four levels: high,
33 moderate, low, and very low quality.²⁷
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DISCUSSION

The object of this SR is to assess the effectiveness and safety of acupuncture treatment in postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery. Recently, two SRs of acupuncture for postoperative pain were published^{9,10}. Although the type of surgery may influence the pain site and intensity, both reviews included multiple surgery types such as abdominal, lumbar or dental surgery as well as laparoscopic surgery.³¹ Moreover, the definition of acupuncture used in those studies is either too broad, including multiple types of acupuncture point stimulation such as acupressure and transcutaneous electrical acupoint stimulation⁹ or too narrow, only focusing on ear acupuncture.¹⁰ Therefore, we will evaluate postoperative pain induced by laparoscopic surgery and define acupuncture treatment adequately as two components: (1) needling with penetration of the skin and (2) on specific points including traditional acupuncture points or painful points around the incision or shoulder region.

This SR will provide a summary of the current evidence on the effectiveness and safety of acupuncture for patients with postoperative pain after laparoscopic surgery. This evidence will provide information useful to patients, practitioners and health policy-makers who consider acupuncture a potential adjuvant therapy to conventional analgesics.

Author affiliations

1 Dept. of Acupuncture & Moxibustion, College of Korean Medicine, Kyung Hee University, Seoul,

[South Korea](#) ~~Republic of Korea~~

2 Dept. of Surgery, Kyung Hee University School of Medicine, Seoul, South Korea

Contributors

The search strategy was developed by S Lee. S Lee, J Park and J Kim will search and select the studies. JD Lee will act as an arbiter in the selection stage. Extraction of data will be conducted by S Lee, J Park and J Kim. Assessment of risk of bias, reporting quality and quality of evidence will be performed by S Lee, J Park and J Kim. Interpretation of the analyses will be performed by all authors.

All authors read and approved the final manuscript for publication.

Funding

This study received no specific grant from any agency.

Competing interests

None

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For peer review only

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5 **Online Resource 1** Search strategies
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9 **MEDLINE (Ovid Online)**
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12 1. exp Laparoscopy/
13 2. exp Surgical Procedures, Minimally Invasive/
14 3. exp Video-Assisted Surgery/
15 4. (laparoscop* or coelioscop* or celioscop* or peritoneoscop* or minimally invasive or
16 video assisted surgery).mp.
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18 5. OR/1-4
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21 6. exp Pain, Postoperative/
22 7. exp Analgesia/
23 8. exp Pain management/
24 9. exp Analgesia, Patient-controlled/
25 10. (pain* or analgesi* or ache* or suffering* or discomfort).mp.
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27 11. OR/6-10
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29 12. exp Acupuncture/
30 13. exp Acupuncture therapy/
31 14. exp Electroacupuncture/
32 15. exp Acupuncture points/
33 16. exp Meridians/
34 17. (acupuncture or electroacupuncture or electro-acupuncture or auriculoacupuncture or
35 auriculo-acupuncture or dry needling or acupuncturist* or acupoint* or meridian*).mp.
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37 18. OR/12-17
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