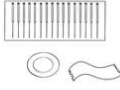


Figure 1. Acupuncture Ritual

We set up standardized ritual operations as follows:


Step 1: The patient is guided to a separate, quiet room. An acupuncturist meets the patient and informs him/her to receive a 30-minute duration of acupuncture treatment.

“Hello! I will give you a 30-minute duration of acupuncture treatment. Here are the acupuncture needles I am going to use. The ring and plaster will be used to determine the location of acupuncture points. Now you can rest for a while.”




Step 2: After the patient is completely relaxed, the acupuncturist asks the patient to stay in a fixed position.

“Please lie flat on the bed. The acupoints are distributed in the head, hands, and feet.”



Manual acupuncture

“Please lie prone on the bed and expose your upper back. The acupoints are distributed in shoulders and upper back.”

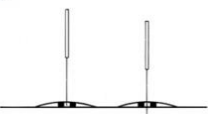


Sham acupuncture

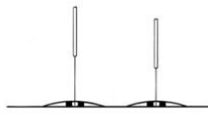
Step 3: Start the acupuncture treatment and insert the needle.

“Now I’m going to start the acupuncture treatment. Please relax yourself.”

After sterilization, the acupuncturist places a small plastic ring over the acupuncture point/non-acupuncture point and fixes the ring with plaster, and then inserts the needle through the plaster inside the ring.



Manual acupuncture

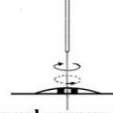


Sham acupuncture

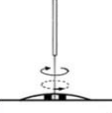
Step 4: Start the first manual manipulation after all the needles are inserted into the appropriate place.

“The needle has been inserted smoothly. Now I will rotate each needle for a while. This is called “acupuncture manipulation”, which is a routine in traditional acupuncture treatment. A total of four times during the treatment will be performed. Now it’s the first time of acupuncture manipulation.”

The manual manipulation of each needle lasts 10 seconds and is repeated a total of 4 times with an interval of 10 minutes.



Manual acupuncture



Sham acupuncture

Step 5: Start the second manual manipulation.

“Now it’s the second time of acupuncture manipulation.”

Step 6: Start the third manual manipulation.

“Now it’s the third time of acupuncture manipulation.”

Step 7: Start the fourth manual manipulation and then finish the treatment.

“Now it’s the fourth time of acupuncture manipulation. Then the acupuncture treatment is over and I would pull the needle out. (After the needle out,) Okay, now you can get up. Do you have any discomfort?”

Step 8: Assess the average acupuncture sensations of each treatment 10 minutes immediately after treatment.