
OBSERVATIONAL STUDY TO ASSESS THE FEASIBILITY, PRACTICALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF EAR ACUPUNCTURE GROUPS BASED ON THE NADA-PROTOCOL IN PATIENTS WITH SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS

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Background: Ear acupuncture based on the NADA-Protocol combines the use of five standardized ear points in an open group setting. The NADA-Protocol has shown some positive effects in patients with different psychiatric diseases. To assess the practicality and effectiveness of NADA ear acupuncture we conducted a prospective observational trial on a psychosomatic ward.

Method: During the 6 months investigation period the CGI, SCL-90R, SF-36 and 'Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale' (PSS) were applied at baseline, every six weeks before and every four weeks after introduction of the NADA-Protocoll. The current level of 'stress', 'sensation of pain', 'agitation' and 'fatigue' were assessed using visual analog scales (VAS). We applied regression models with NADA group intervention and time or their interaction as factors.

Results: We included a total of 31 patients, (22 females (71%); mean age 42,6 years), mainly diagnosed with a Major Depressive Episode. We found an increase in SF-36 total scores in linear regression ($p = 0.04$, $t = 2.17$). The VAS scores for 'stress' (before 4,1 (SD 3,2); after 2,5 (SD 2,3); linear regression $p < 0.0001$), and 'agitation' (before 4,6 (SD 3,2); after 3,0 (SD 2,5); linear regression $p < 0.0001$) dropped significantly. In all models the intervention, the time and their interaction were significant factors.

Conclusion: The NADA-Protocol seemed to have some impact on increase in overall health-related quality of life and 'stress' and 'agitation' levels. As for now the NADA-Protocol appears to be a useful additional treatment option in the context of patients on a psychosomatic ward.