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Volume 2, Issue 2, June 1976, Pages 141-148

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Research report

Transcutaneous electrical stimulation and acupuncture: Comparison of treatment for low-back pain

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Abstract

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Twelve patients suffering chronic low-back pain were treated with both acupuncture and transcutaneous electrical stimulation. The order of treatments was balanced, and changes in the intensity and quality of pain were measured with the McGill Pain Questionnaire. The results, based on a measure of overall pain intensity, show that pain relief greater than 33% was produced in 75% of the patients by acupuncture and in 66% by electrical stimulation. The mean duration of pain relief was 40 h after acupuncture and 23 h after electrical stimulation. Although the mean scores are larger for acupuncture than for transcutaneous stimulation, statistical analyses of the data failed to reveal significant differences between the two treatments on any of the measures. Both methods, therefore, appear to be equally effective, and probably have the same underlying mechanism of action. Consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of the two methods suggests that transcutaneous electrical stimulation is potentially the more practical, since it can be administered under supervision by paramedical personnel.

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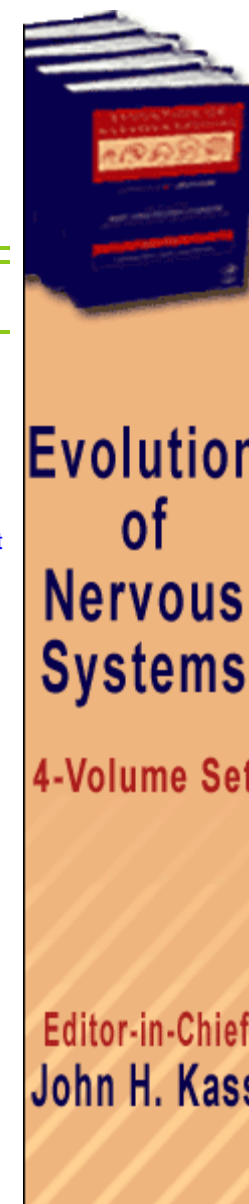
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