

between students receiving zinc ($n = 124$) and those receiving placebo ($n = 125$) (median, 9 days; 95% confidence interval [CI], 8–9 days; median, 9 days, 95% CI, 7–10 days, respectively; $P = .71$). There were no significant differences in the time to resolution of any of the nine symptoms studied. Compared with controls, more students in the zinc group reported adverse effects (88.6% vs 79.8%; $P = .06$); bad taste (60.2% vs 37.9%; $P = .001$); nausea (29.3% vs 16.1%; $P = .01$); mouth, tongue, or throat discomfort (36.6% vs 24.2%; $P = .03$); and diarrhea (10.6% vs 4.0%; $P = .05$). **Conclusions:** In this community-based, randomized controlled trial, ZGG lozenges were not effective in treating cold symptoms in children and adolescents. Further studies with virologic testing are needed to clarify what role, if any, zinc may play in treating cold symptoms.

Richards D, Marley J. Stimulation of auricular acupuncture points in weight loss. Australian Family Physician 1998;272:73–77.

Objective: Many overweight people are aware that diets can help with weight loss but have difficulty in suppressing their appetite. Acupuncture stimulates the auricular branch of the vagal nerve and raises serotonin levels, both of which have been shown to increase tone in the smooth muscle of the stomach, thus suppressing appetite. The aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness of transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation of specific auricular acupuncture points on appetite suppression. **Methods:** Sixty overweight subjects, randomly divided into an active and a control group, used the AcuSlim device twice daily for 4 weeks. The active group attached the AcuSlim to the acupuncture ear points shenmen and stomach, whereas the control group attached the device to their thumb where there are no acupuncture points. The goal of a 2 kg weight loss was set and changes in appetite and weight were reported after four weeks. **Results:** Of those who responded, 95% of the active group noticed suppression of appetite, whereas none of the control group noticed such a change. None of the control group lost the required 2 kg, with only four subjects losing any weight at all. Both the number of subjects who lost weight and the mean weight loss were significantly higher in the active group ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Frequent stimulation of specific auricular acupuncture points is an effective method of appetite suppression which leads to weight loss.

Richards KC. Effect of a back massage and relaxation intervention on sleep in critically ill patients. American Journal of Critical Care 1998;7:288–299.

Background: Critically ill patients are deprived of sleep and its potential healing qualities, although many receive medications to promote sleep. No one has adequately evaluated holistic nonpharmacological techniques designed to promote sleep in critical care practice. **Objectives:** To determine the effects of (1) a back massage and (2) combined muscle

relaxation, mental imagery, and a music audiotape on the sleep of older men with a cardiovascular illness who were hospitalized in a critical care unit. **Methods:** Sixty-nine subjects were randomly assigned to a 6-minute back massage ($n = 24$); a teaching session on relaxation and a 7.5-minute audiotape at bedtime consisting of muscle relaxation, mental imagery, and relaxing background music ($n = 28$); or the usual nursing care (controls, $n = 17$). Polysomnography was used to measure 1 night of sleep for each patient. Sleep efficiency index was the primary variable of interest. One-way analysis of variance was used to test for difference in the index among the three groups. **Results:** Descriptive statistics showed improved quality of sleep among the back-massage group. Initial analysis showed a significant difference among the three groups in sleep efficiency index. Post hoc testing with the Duncan procedure indicated a significant difference between the back-massage group and the control group; patients in the back-massage group slept more than 1 hour longer than patients in the control group. However, the variance was significantly different among the three groups, and reanalysis of data with only 17 subjects in each group revealed no difference among groups ($P = .06$). **Conclusions:** Back massage is useful for promoting sleep in critically ill older men.

Streitberger K, Kleinhenz J. Introducing a placebo needle into acupuncture research. Lancet 1998;352:364–365.

Background: A problem acupuncture research has to face is the concept of a control group. If, in control groups, non-acupoint needling is done, physiological acupuncture effects are implied. Therefore the effects shown in this group are often close to those shown in the acupuncture group. In other trials, control groups have received obviously different treatments, such as transcutaneous electrical nervous stimulation or TENS-laser treatment; it is not clear if the effects of acupuncture are due only to the psychological effects of the treatment. **Methods:** We developed a placebo acupuncture needle, with which it should be possible to simulate an acupuncture procedure without penetrating the skin. In a cross-over experiment with 60 volunteers we tested whether needling with the placebo needle feels any different from real acupuncture. **Findings:** Of 60 volunteers, 54 felt a penetration with acupuncture (mean visual analogue scale [VAS] 13.4; SD 10.58) and 47 felt it with placebo (VAS 8.86; SD 10.55), 34 felt a dull pain sensation (DEQI) with acupuncture and 13 with placebo. None of the volunteers suspected that the needle may not have penetrated the skin. **Interpretation:** The placebo needle is sufficiently credible to be used in investigations of the effects of acupuncture. **Ternov K, Nilsson M, Lofberg L, Algotsson L, Akesson J. Acupuncture for pain relief during childbirth.** Acupuncture & Electro Therapeutics Research 1998;23:19–26.