

Acupuncture for quality of life in breast cancer patients receiving chemotherapy - a pragmatic randomized trial

Summary:

At the Mammazentrum Hamburg, patients with breast cancer receiving chemotherapy have the option to receive acupuncture treatment in addition to conventional therapy to maintain quality of life and to reduce the side effects of chemotherapy. The primary aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of adding acupuncture treatment to usual care compared to usual care only on health-related quality of life in patients with breast cancer. In a randomized pragmatic trial, 140 women with newly diagnosed breast cancer treated at the Mammazentrum Jerusalem Krankenhaus who, in addition to chemotherapy, will receive acupuncture treatment, will be compared to patients who receive no acupuncture (control group). Treatment duration is 6 months. The main outcome parameter is the quality of life measured with the Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy - Breast Cancer (FACT-B) questionnaire at 6 months.

Qualitative part

The retrospective qualitative study aims integrating a mixed-method approach, which allows in a secondary analysis a triangulation of the results of the validated questionnaires with the individual statements of the patients. A total of 20 semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted. From each treatment group five responders and five non-responders (defined by the primary outcome) were randomly selected. The interviews were digitally recorded, pseudonymized, transcribed and deductively and inductively analyzed according to Qualitative Content Analysis using the software MAXQDA®. Main topics of the interview guideline in both groups were: wellbeing and side effects during the chemotherapy and effects on everyday life and ways of dealing with the cancer disease and coping strategies. In the acupuncture group also the subjective experience of the acupuncture treatment and its perceived effects were part of the interview.

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