Acupressure reduced pain, anxiety and heart rate in victims of minor trauma before they reached the hospital, according to recent research.

The study, "Prehospital Analgesia with Acupressure in Victims of Minor Trauma: A Prospective, Randomized, Double-Blinded Trial," was conducted by researchers at the University of Vienna Department of Anesthesia and Intensive Care, the Vienna Red Cross, and the Research Institute of the Vienna Red Cross.

Sixty people, ages 19 to 99, participated in the study once initial medical intervention, such as bandaging, was complete. They all suffered from similar small injuries, such as simple fractures, small wounds and contusions.

At the site of the accident, a paramedic measured victims' blood pressure and heart rate, and asked them to rate their pain and anxiety on a scale of zero to 100. Subjects were also asked to rate their belief in acupressure as a treatment for pain. They were then assigned to one of three groups: true acupressure, sham acupressure or no acupressure.

Another paramedic performed the acupressure for approximately three minutes, then brought the subject to the ambulance. This paramedic was not aware that one of the acupressure treatments was false, but was instead told that the aim of the study was to compare two acupressure techniques using different points. Data collection was always performed by the other paramedic, in the absence of the one applying acupressure.

Upon arrival at the hospital, subjects were again asked to rate their pain and anxiety; blood pressure and heart rate were measured. Subjects were also asked to rate their overall satisfaction on a scale of zero to 100.

"After treatment the three groups differed in a highly significant way in pain, anxiety, and heart rate," state the study's authors.

In the true acupressure group, 89 percent of the subjects had a significant heart-rate reduction, a significant decrease in pain and anxiety, and had significantly better patient satisfaction scores.

In the other two groups, measurements of pain and heart rate remained unchanged. Although there was a decrease in anxiety for both groups, it was not statistically significant. Belief in acupressure did not differ among the three groups.

"In summary," state the study's authors, "our results could show that acupressure is an effective and easy-to-learn treatment for pain in first aid and emergency trauma care. We recommend this technique for emergency physicians and also for nonacademic personnel, such as nurses, paramedics, firefighters, or emergency medical technicians."}
