

# ANXIETY FEASIBILITY STUDY

## ARRC SYMPOSIUM 2019

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# **GAD STUDY**

**In July 2017 I received the funding from the BAAC to conduct a feasibility study that compared acupuncture with cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) in treating generalised anxiety disorder (GAD).**

**The project built on a BAAC pilot study conducted in conjunction with AnxietyUK nation wide treating patients suffering from GAD with acupuncture in 2016.**

# GAD STUDY

The proposed project was a feasibility study which aimed to assess:

- **recruitment and retention**
- **safety and side-effects**
- **show whether patients liked acupuncture as well as CBT, which is the main non-drug treatment advised by the NHS**
- **whether patients felt the same or different after the course of CBT or acupuncture treatment**

# GAD STUDY

The project was designed as a small scale RCT that compared CBT with acupuncture with standard intervention according to step 1 and 2 of the NICE guidance for GAD, 2011:

| Focus of the intervention  | Nature of the intervention  |
|--|---|
| <b>STEP 1: All known and suspected presentations of GAD</b>  | <b>Identification and assessment; education about GAD and treatment options; active monitoring</b>  |
| <b>STEP 2: Diagnosed GAD that has not improved after education and active monitoring in primary care</b> | <b>Low-intensity psychological interventions: individual non-facilitated self-help, individual guided self-help and psycho-educational groups</b> |

# GAD STUDY

- It consisted of two groups with 10-12 participants in each group, randomly allocated.
- The main requirements was a letter from participants' GP or other medical professionals confirming that they suffered from GAD.
- In both groups participants received a course of 8 treatments on a weekly frequency to start with and fortnightly after 4-6 sessions.
- All treatments were delivered on a one-to-one basis and lasted 45 minutes each after the initial consultation (1 hour).

# GAD STUDY

- ▶ Life style advice, such as exercise and/or diet were given in both groups.
- ▶ The data collection was based on GAD7 and Measure Yourself Medical Outcome Profile (MYMOP) questionnaires.
- ▶ GAD7 was given to each patient on the first session of the course of treatments, then on the fourth session and, again in the last session in both groups.
- ▶ Participants filled in the MYMOP before each treatment session.

# **GAD7 QUESTIONNAIRE**

- 1. Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge (0-1-2-3)**
- 2. Not being able to stop or control worrying (0-1-2-3)**
- 3. Worrying too much about different things (0-1-2-3)**
- 4. Trouble relaxing (0-1-2-3)**
- 5. Being so restless that it is hard to sit still (0-1-2-3)**
- 6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable (0-1-2-3)**
- 7. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen (0-1-2-3)**

**Scores of 5, 10, and 15 represent cut points for mild, moderate, and severe anxiety, respectively**

# GAD STUDY

## RESULTS (so far)

### RECRUITMENT

- For several reasons the study is not finished, yet. There were initial delays with the ethics application approval, which took almost five months
- Participants were recruited through leaflets, posters in the University of Westminster various campuses and in the Polyclinic, and a website page; leaflets left in a couple of GP practices near the campus; an ad in the AnxietyUK website; leaflets left in other university campuses near the university polyclinic (SOAS, UCL, Birkbeck universities)

# GAD STUDY

Recruitment was and is very difficult because:

- lack of support from the university
- inclusion criteria requires a letter from the GP or any other medical professional confirming that participants suffered from GAD
- the study was and still is conducted during working hours
- a few participants when allocated to the unwanted group declined to participate in the study (4 people)

# GAD STUDY

## RETENTION

- **The aim of the study was to recruit 22-24 participants in total and split them into two groups. So far, the acupuncture arm has had 9 patients and the CBT one has had only 5. The lower number in the latter was due to limited time availability of the CBT therapist**
- **8 participants of the acupuncture group completed the eight session course of treatment. One stopped after six sessions because she started to work and could not attend the clinic**

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- 2 participants of the CBT group finished the course of eight session; two stopped after 3-4 sessions because of work and was is still having treatment
- The treatments were not always delivered on a weekly and fortnightly frequency as originally planned

## SAFETY AND SIDE-EFFECTS

- Nobody reported any side-effect from the treatment
- Their original symptoms varied according to what was happening in their life, but no one developed new symptoms

# GAD STUDY

## COMPARISON BETWEEN ACUPUNCTURE AND CBT

- **Participants found both kinds of treatment equally useful**
- **They found ways to cope and manage their chronic anxiety**
- **In the acupuncture arm, a few managed to do things that they would have not done before**
- **They were able to make lifestyle changes that improved their condition and their general wellbeing**

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## ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT

- **The study is not completed, therefore it is not possible to discuss treatment in details. In general terms, no protocol to treat GAD was followed or devised**
- **Participants were diagnosed according to CM models without using any particular approach; treatment changed according to what they presented in every session and points were selected accordingly**

# GAD STUDY

- Only body acupuncture was applied
- No other technique was employed, such as moxibustion or cupping
- In most cases conventional *deqi* sensation was avoided because contra productive with patients suffering from anxiety
- The needles used were very fine (size 16-18 x 30mm)

# GAD STUDY

## WHAT NEXT?

- **Finish the study**
- **Write articles about it and publish it in more journals**
- **Inspire other practitioners to do a new study about the effectiveness of acupuncture in treating GAD**