

Comment on Inadequate Evidence for Acupuncture as an Alternative or Adjunct to Antidepressants/ Psychotherapy for Postpartum Depression: A Bayesian Systematic Review and Network Meta-Analysis [Letter]

Xilong Yang¹, Shimin Li²

¹Zhejiang Chinese Medical University, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, People's Republic of China; ²Hangzhou Third Hospital Affiliated to Zhejiang Chinese Medical University, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, People's Republic of China

Correspondence: Shimin Li, Hangzhou Third Hospital Affiliated to Zhejiang Chinese Medical University, No. 38 West Lake Road, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, People's Republic of China, Tel +8613957161984, Email 1572355523@qq.com

Dear editor

We express our gratitude to the authors of the review article on acupuncture as an alternative or complementary therapy for the treatment of postpartum depression (PPD).¹ The review effectively utilized the PICOS framework to articulate the key issues and significantly enhanced the stringency of the inclusion criteria for the literature, thereby increasing the robustness of its conclusions.² However, we propose several suggestions to further enhance the accuracy of the results.

Firstly, it is important to highlight that the quality of the randomized controlled trials (RCTs) included in the study is notably suboptimal. Despite reaching certain conclusions, the trials did not account for the varying severity of PPD at the time of enrollment, resulting in different baseline scores, commonly referred to as covariates. The absence of stratified analysis for these covariates in the statistical analysis introduces confounding bias, which the review acknowledged but did not adequately address in terms of its adverse effects on the results.³ Secondly, the review did not thoroughly examine the heterogeneity introduced by the use of different antidepressants in the control groups of the included RCTs. Given that various antidepressants exhibit differing effectiveness in treating PPD, this heterogeneity could significantly impact the results. The review failed to discuss this issue in detail or provide relevant statistical countermeasures. We recommend incorporating heterogeneity tests to bolster the credibility of the review's conclusions.⁴

The limitations stemming from these methodological defects in the trials hinder a clear determination of acupuncture's efficacy, potentially leading to a misassessment of its therapeutic effect on PPD.

In summary, while this systematic review offers valuable insights into the treatment of PPD, statistical enhancements are necessary to improve the accuracy and generalizability of the research findings, thereby providing a more robust scientific basis for the clinical treatment of PPD.

Disclosure

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest in this communication.

References

1. Zhao FY, Li L, Xu P, et al. Inadequate evidence for acupuncture as an alternative or adjunct to antidepressants/psychotherapy for postpartum depression: a bayesian systematic review and network meta-analysis. *Neuropsychiatr Dis Treat*. 2024;20:1741–1755. doi:10.2147/NDT.S484387
2. Liberati A, Altman DG, Tetzlaff J, et al. The PRISMA statement for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses of studies that evaluate healthcare interventions: explanation and elaboration. *BMJ*. 2009;339(jul21 1):b2700. doi:10.1136/bmj.b2700

3. Agoritsas T, Merglen A, Shah ND, et al. Adjusted analyzes in studies addressing therapy and harm: users' guides to the medical literature. *JAMA*. 2017;317(7):748. doi:10.1001/jama.2016.20029
4. Tomlinson CL, Patel S, Meek C, et al. Physiotherapy intervention in Parkinson's disease: systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ*. 2012;345(aug06 1):e5004. doi:10.1136/bmj.e5004

Dove Medical Press encourages responsible, free and frank academic debate. The content of the Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment 'letters to the editor' section does not necessarily represent the views of Dove Medical Press, its officers, agents, employees, related entities or the Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment editors. While all reasonable steps have been taken to confirm the content of each letter, Dove Medical Press accepts no liability in respect of the content of any letter, nor is it responsible for the content and accuracy of any letter to the editor.

Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment

Dovepress

Publish your work in this journal

Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment is an international, peer-reviewed journal of clinical therapeutics and pharmacology focusing on concise rapid reporting of clinical or pre-clinical studies on a range of neuropsychiatric and neurological disorders. This journal is indexed on PubMed Central, the 'PsycINFO' database and CAS, and is the official journal of The International Neuropsychiatric Association (INA). The manuscript management system is completely online and includes a very quick and fair peer-review system, which is all easy to use. Visit <http://www.dovepress.com/testimonials.php> to read real quotes from published authors.

Submit your manuscript here: <https://www.dovepress.com/neuropsychiatric-disease-and-treatment-journal>

<https://doi.org/10.2147/NDT.S505574>