Prioritizing Chinese Medicine Clinical Research Questions in Cancer Palliative Care: A Two-Round International Delphi Survey

Background

Some Chinese medicine (CM) modalities:
Chinese herbal medicines (CHM) + acupuncture

In managing the symptoms among palliative cancer patients:
- Cancer-related fatigue
- Chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting
- Improving quality of life

However, methodological limitations among existing clinical trials ➔ Uncertainty on the effectiveness of CM modalities

Aim

To prioritize CM clinical research questions for cancer palliative care using a two-round Delphi survey

Methods

Identified research needs from existing overviews of systematic reviews (SRs) and SRs ➔ 29 research questions

International experts in cancer palliative care

In the two-round Delphi survey:
- i. rate clinical importance of answering the questions on a 9-point Likert scale (ranging from “not important at all” to “of highest importance”)
- ii. provide qualitative comments for supporting the rating
- iii. suggest outcome measures

Results

List of research priorities in cancer palliative care identified in the two-round Delphi survey:

1. Addition of electroacupuncture + oral vitamin B6 (pyridoxine) supplement for reducing paresthesia and dysesthesia
2. Addition of manual acupuncture + artificial saliva for reducing xerostomia
3. Acupressure provided by CMPs vs self-acupressure for improving insomnia among patients receiving chemotherapy
4. Addition of manual acupuncture + conventional care for reducing anxiety
5. Addition of manual acupuncture + opioids for reducing pain
6. Addition of manual acupuncture + exercise for reducing fatigue
7. Addition of CHM + conventional care (Glycerin suppositories/Lactulose syrup) for reducing constipation
8. Addition of CHM + conventional care (Blood transfusion/Erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (e.g. Epoetin)) for improving anemia

Conclusion

- International experts have achieved consensus on eight research priorities in Chinese medicine for cancer palliative care.
- Further research on herb safety and herb-drug interaction should be performed before conducting international trials on CHM.

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