Electroacupuncture analgesia for colonoscopy. a prospective, randomized, placebo-controlled study.

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OBJECTIVE: A study was undertaken to compare the effectiveness of acupuncture in reducing patient's discomfort and anxiety during colonoscopy with a standard sedation protocol. METHODS: Thirty patients scheduled to undergo colonoscopy were randomly assigned to receive acupuncture, sham, or no acupuncture. A verbal rating scale was used to measure patient's pain when the endoscope reached four scheduled positions. Midazolam was administered at baseline and again anytime patients complained of "severe" pain. The amount of midazolam administered was recorded. A verbal rating scale was used to assess patient's satisfaction with the level of sedation achieved. RESULTS: Pain level was lower, although not significantly, in the acupuncture group. Midazolam boluses were required in three patients with acupuncture (30%), eight in the sham group (80%), and nine in the control group (90%) (p = 0.01). Six patients in the acupuncture group (60%) reported optimum acceptance of colonoscopy compared with only one in the sham group (10%) and none in the control group (0%) (p = 0.016). Satisfaction scores, assessed 24-72 h after colonoscopy, were extremely high (median score 90 of 100) in the three groups. CONCLUSIONS: Acupuncture may decrease the demand for sedative drugs during colonoscopy by reducing discomfort and anxiety of the patient and the well-known adverse effects of pharmacologic sedation.