

The Needle

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Electroacupuncture for Postherpetic Neuralgia (The BMAS Blog)

Summary: This blog post reviews a recent, large-scale study published in JAMA Neurology which found that electroacupuncture was significantly more effective than a sham control for managing postherpetic neuralgia. The trial utilised daily treatments combining a hand-foot Shaoyang point pairing with local surrounding Ashi points, demonstrating a 46% responder rate and offering a well-tolerated alternative to conventional medications like topical capsaicin or gabapentin. While the efficacy is promising, the author points out that the intense protocol of twenty sessions over four weeks is a major commitment that may be difficult to fully replicate in Western clinics.

Traditional Context from *A Manual of Acupuncture*: The study's protocol couples [Yanglingquan GB-34](#) with [Zhigou SJ-6](#), a classic pairing that leverages six channel theory to address pain radiating along the flanks. A fundamental [point selection method](#) involves "selecting [Zhigou SJ-6](#) from the hand shaoyang Sanjiao channel to treat hypochondriac pain due to disharmony of the foot shaoyang Gall Bladder channel." Given that shingles frequently manifests as intercostal neuralgia in the lateral Shaoyang region, this hand-foot coupling is a logical traditional approach to managing the resulting neuropathic pain.

Clinical Application: While daily treatments for four weeks may be a hard sell for private practice patients, the pain relief achieved using this simple Shaoyang protocol and local surround needling is worth considering. For patients suffering from postherpetic neuralgia on the trunk, consider utilising [Yanglingquan GB-34](#), [Zhigou SJ-6](#), and electroacupuncture across local Ashi points, perhaps modifying the frequency to a more realistic twice-weekly schedule.

[Read the full piece](#)

Clinical pearl from *A Manual of Acupuncture*

While [Hegu L.I.-4](#) is a common starting point for dental pain, *A Manual of Acupuncture* provides a more targeted approach for stubborn cases that differentiates between the upper and lower jaw:

"As far as toothache and pain from tooth decay is concerned, Zhu Dan-xi of the Jin-Yuan dynasty recommended applying moxibustion to [Sanjian L.I.-3](#) for toothache of the lower jaw (and to [Shousanli L.I.-10](#) for toothache of the upper jaw), whilst in modern clinical practice, some Chinese practitioners favour [Sanjian L.I.-3](#) over [Hegu L.I.-4](#) for the treatment of severe or recalcitrant toothache."

If you are treating a patient with intense dental pain that is unresponsive to standard distal needling, consider the Shu-Stream point [Sanjian L.I.-3](#) for lower jaw pain, or move proximally to [Shousanli L.I.-10](#) for upper jaw involvement.

Navigating the Student Debt Crisis and the Future of Acupuncture Education (Qiological podcast)

Summary: This podcast episode features a discussion with Danielle Reghi regarding the severe student debt crisis facing new acupuncturists and the existential threat that new federal RISE and AHEAD loan metrics pose to acupuncture colleges. The conversation outlines the Oregon Acupuncture Workforce Sustainability Proposal, highlighting potential solutions like standardising state-specific educational pathways and establishing a bachelor's-level entry point to keep the profession viable.

Clinical Application: While this discussion steps outside the treatment room, clinic owners can use these insights to better understand the shifting financial realities of their incoming associates and consider advocating for sustainable educational models in their own regions.

[Listen to the episode](#)

Evaluation of the Efficacy of Laser Acupuncture on Uremic Pruritus (Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice)

Summary: This double-blind randomized clinical trial investigated the use of laser acupuncture on points [Quchi L.I.-11](#), [Xuehai SP-10](#), and [Baichongwo M-LE-34](#) for uremic pruritus in hemodialysis patients. After four weeks of treatment, the active laser group experienced statistically significant reductions in itch severity and improved dermatology-related quality of life compared to the sham control.

Traditional Context from *A Manual of Acupuncture*: Traditional Chinese Medicine attributes itchy skin conditions to external pathogens like Wind, Heat, and Dampness, and/or internal imbalances such as Blood Heat and Blood Stasis. To relieve these symptoms, acupuncture points [Quchi L.I.-11](#) and [Baichongwo M-LE-34](#) are frequently used to clear heat, eliminate wind, and drain dampness from the body. Additionally, [Xuehai SP-10](#) is utilized specifically to cool and invigorate the blood.

Clinical Application: For patients suffering from severe chronic itching who are needle-phobic or have compromised immunity due to conditions like end-stage renal disease, low-level laser acupuncture offers a safe and painless alternative.

[Read the full piece](#)

The Placebo Effect of Sham Acupuncture in Insomnia Trials (Journal of Integrative Medicine)

Summary: This systematic review and meta-analysis evaluates the placebo effect of sham acupuncture used as a control in randomized clinical trials for insomnia. The researchers found that sham interventions produce a measurable and relatively stable placebo effect, with low-intensity, superficial stimulation at non-meridian points yielding the strongest responses. While the authors focus on how these non-specific effects complicate proving acupuncture's specific efficacy, we can view this as a reminder that the clinical encounter, patient expectation, and gentle tactile stimulation hold inherent therapeutic value.

Traditional Context from A Manual of Acupuncture: While researchers view the robust response to light 'sham' stimulation as a methodological hurdle that blurs true efficacy, it is also arguable that light stimulation of points may still have significant effects. This in turn calls into question the use of 'sham' points or non-penetrating needles as inert placebos.

Clinical Application: Since low-intensity, superficial stimulation produced a strong relaxing effect in these trials, you might consider incorporating very light, shallow needling—or even non-insertive techniques—for highly anxious or needle-phobic insomnia patients. This approach may help you soothe an agitated nervous system and build patient trust without risking the overstimulation that sometimes accompanies stronger manual manipulation.

[Read the full piece](#)

Which point am I?

I am the terminal point of my channel, yet anatomically I reside on the contralateral side of the face from where my superficial pathway began on the hand. Positioned where my channel meets and hands over its flow to the Stomach channel, I am the premier local choice for opening passages and restoring the ability to distinguish the fragrant from the foul.

While my classical indications focus heavily on resolving local congestion, polyps, and sores, I possess a unique modern clinical application: when needed transversely to join with [Sibai ST-2](#) with strong manipulation, I am employed to rapidly control the severe pain of biliary ascariasis caused by roundworms in the bile duct.

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