Smoking Cessation: A Paradise for an Alternative to Evidence-based Medicine?

To the Editor:

Tahiri et al concluded that acupuncture and hypnosis may help people quit smoking. They used the Cochrane assessment tool to assess the quality of included randomized controlled trials for their meta-analysis, but their conclusion differs from 2 recent Cochrane systematic reviews: “There is no consistent evidence that acupuncture (and the related intervention acupressure, laser therapy, or electrostimulation) and hypnotherapy are effective for smoking cessation.”

These Cochrane systematic reviews included 44 studies, whereas Tahiri et al included only 10 studies in their meta-analysis, with a mean of 108 patients per study (median, 90). The sample size of their largest study included is 258. Smoking abstinence after acupuncture was 55% in cases versus 4% in controls, the largest effect observed in the meta-analysis. The study by Kerr et al was published in The Journal of Chinese Medicine, which has no impact factor and is not referenced in MEDLINE. I was unable to find any reference of the 3 authors concerning acupuncture or a clinical trial in MEDLINE. Note that the first author of the article, Kerr from Middlesex, United Kingdom, must not be confused with Catherine E. Kerr, who published reviews of several well-designed randomized trials that ruled out an effect of alternative medicine on smoking cessation when she was at Harvard Medical School.

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References

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