ABSTRACT:
Acupuncture, including electroacupuncture, is an important modality in TCMM therapies. Acupuncture is increasingly used in Europe and North America. Its widening acceptance demands continual safety assessment. This pilot study aimed to evaluate the frequency and severity of adverse events (AEs) for electroacupuncture in a teaching clinic.

Needle-only acupuncture has a high patient satisfaction rate and low adverse event (AE) rate. Our study demonstrated that the satisfaction with and safety of electroacupuncture and needle-only acupuncture are similar.

Discussion
In this study both the patients receiving e-stim acupuncture and no e-stim acupuncture were equally satisfied with their treatments. There were no significant adverse events associated with either arm of the study.
In the e-stim acupuncture group there was a trend toward there to be more pain and cramping reported than in the no e-stim acupuncture group. Of these two findings, only the cramping showed an effect size of greater than 0.2 and therefore only a small clinical difference. It is possible that this is a true finding, given that e-stim is known to cause muscle cramping at certain settings. It is also possible that this was due to the choice of patients that received e-stim acupuncture (supervising clinicians had the option to identify whether the patients needed e-stim or not), the heavier gauge needles and deeper needle placement that are often used to support the electrodes utilized for the electrical stimulation.

Those patients not receiving e-stim acupuncture tended to be more relaxed than those in the e-stim group.

Conclusions: acupuncture with electrical stimulation compares favorably with standard acupuncture in terms of both safety and patient satisfaction.

References