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# Effects of auricular gua sha combined with auricular acupressure on sleep quality in young and middle-aged patients with insomnia

**Submission date**
26/03/2026

**Recruitment status**
No longer recruiting

**Registration date**
27/03/2026

**Overall study status**
Completed

**Last Edited**
31/03/2026

**Condition category**
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[_] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[_] Results
[_] Individual participant data
[X] Record updated in last year

**Plain English summary of protocol**
Background and study aims
Insomnia is a common sleep problem that can make daily life difficult. Some people also experience anxiety and low mood alongside poor sleep. This study looked at whether using ear acupressure together with a technique called Gua Sha on the ear could help people sleep better. The aim was to compare this combined treatment with ear acupressure on its own.

Who can participate?
Adults aged 18 years and older with insomnia were able to take part. Participants needed to have an insomnia severity score of at least 8. People were not able to take part if they had certain health problems, were pregnant or breastfeeding, had skin problems on their ears, or were allergic to the tape used in treatment.

What does the study involve?
Participants were randomly placed into one of two groups.
One group received ear acupressure once a week for 4 weeks. Small cowherb seeds were placed on specific points on the ear, and participants pressed each point several times a day.
The second group received the same ear acupressure plus ear Gua Sha once a week for 4 weeks. Gua Sha involved gentle scraping and massage of the ear using a copper tool.
All participants were asked to return for follow-ups up to one month after the treatment period.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Participants in the combined treatment group showed improvements in sleep and reductions in anxiety and low mood compared with the group that received acupressure alone. No serious side effects were reported during the study. Some people may have mild discomfort on the ear from the treatment.

Where is the study run from?
A specialty nurse-led clinic of a tertiary hospital of traditional Chinese medicine in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
The first participant joined the study in March 2023. The study finished in June 2024.

Who is funding the study?
Investigator initiated and funded

Who is the main contact?
Li Tian, tianlisz@suda.edu.cn

# Contact information

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Public, Scientific

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# Additional identifiers

# Study information

### Scientific Title
Effects of auricular gua sha combined with auricular acupressure on sleep quality in young and middle-aged patients with insomnia

### Study objectives
This study aimed to compare the clinical effect of auricular acupressure combined with auricular gua sha compared with auricular acupressure for insomnia patients.

## Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

## Ethics approval(s)
Approved 07/03/2023, Ethics Committee of Soochow University (No. 1 Shizi Street, Suzhou City, Jiangsu Province, Suzhou, 215009, China; +86 5120473567; ethics@suda.edu.cn), ref: SUDA20230307H05

## Primary study design
Interventional

## Allocation
Randomized controlled trial

## Masking
Open (masking not used)

## Control
Active

## Assignment
Parallel

## Purpose
Treatment

## Study type(s)

## Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Insomnia

## Interventions
Group A (control group): Auricular acupressure once weekly for 4 weeks. Cowherb seeds affixed to auricular acupoints (Shenmen, Endocrine, Heart, Subcortical, with patternbased additions). Participants press each point 5 times daily, 30 seconds per point. One ear per session, alternated weekly.

Group B (intervention group): Auricular acupressure combined with auricular gua sha once weekly for 4 weeks. Auricular acupressure protocol identical to the control group. Auricular gua sha performed using a copper scraping tool, including ear microcirculation massage, ear meridian massage, and scraping along auricular regions. One ear per session, alternated weekly.

The randomisation process was performed using a random number table to generate the allocation sequence. Sequentially numbered, opaque, sealed envelopes were used to conceal the allocation until intervention assignment.

## Intervention Type
Behavioural

## Primary outcome(s)

1. Insomnia severity measured using the Insomnia Severity Index (ISI) at six time points: baseline (T0), weekly during the 4week intervention period (T1, T2, T3, T4), and 1 month postintervention (T5)

### Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Sleep quality measured using Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) at three time points: baseline (T0), after the fourth intervention (T4), and 1 month postintervention (T5)
2. Anxiety measured using Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale – Anxiety subscale (HADSA) at six time points: baseline (T0), weekly during the 4week intervention period (T1, T2, T3, T4), and 1 month postintervention (T5)
3. Depression measured using Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale – Depression subscale (HADSD) at six time points: baseline (T0), weekly during the 4week intervention period (T1, T2, T3, T4), and 1 month postintervention (T5)

### Completion date
04/06/2024

## Eligibility

### Key inclusion criteria
1. In accordance with the diagnostic criteria of insomnia in the Chinese Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Treatment of Insomnia in Adults (2017 edition)
2. ISI score >=8 points
3. Age >=18 years old, regardless of gender

### Healthy volunteers allowed
No

### Age group
Mixed

### Lower age limit
18 Years

### Upper age limit
100 Years

### Sex
All

### Total final enrolment
90

### Key exclusion criteria
1. Those suffering from major organic diseases or mental and psychological diseases
2. Those who have recently planned to have a baby or are breastfeeding or pregnant
3. Ear skin with inflammation, eczema, ulcers, frostbite or larger scar organizers
4. People who are allergic to the tape or have other serious adverse events and are unable to complete the trial

**Date of first enrolment**
17/03/2023

**Date of final enrolment**
04/06/2024

# Locations

**Countries of recruitment**
China

# Sponsor information

**Organisation**
School of Nursing, Medical College of Soochow University

# Funder(s)

**Funder type**

**Funder Name**
Investigator initiated and funded

# Results and Publications

**Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan**

**IPD sharing plan summary**
Not expected to be made available

**Study outputs**

| Output type | Details | Date created | Date added | Peer reviewed? | Patient-facing? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other files | Informed consent form in Chinese | | 26/03/2026 | No | No |
| Protocol file | in Chinese | | 26/03/2026 | No | No |