Abstract:
As a complementary medical procedure, acupuncture has a significant impact on the treatment of acute and chronic pain. Though the physiological mechanisms behind this method are still unclear, acupuncture has been claimed to rely also on changes in the central nervous system. Recent functional imaging studies indicate that the so-called default mode network (DMN) which consists of cortical midline structures and lateral parietal regions plays an important role in these processes. This brief overview describes the effects of analgesic acupuncture on the DMN architecture. The stronger interplay between systems dedicated to endogenous analgesia (periaqueductal gray), affective processing (anterior cingulate cortex, amygdala), memory (hippocampus), and self-projective thinking (DMN) following this therapy supports the notion that acupuncture is a mind-body therapy which helps to reintegrate important neural dimensions of inner life and to establish psychophysical pain homeostasis.

Stichworte:
Acupuncture; CNS; Neurobiology; Default mode network

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