

Acupuncture is Effective for Chronic Pain: New Study Published in Archives of Internal Medicine

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A new study published this week in the Archives of Internal Medicine reveals that acupuncture is more effective for chronic pain than “sham acupuncture,” which is a placebo version of the treatment. This study has been touted as one of the largest, most rigorous and robust analyses to date on the effectiveness of acupuncture treatments for the amelioration of pain.

This research, an outcomes analysis from 29 randomized controlled trial studies, included nearly 18,000 people being treated for chronic pain from osteoarthritis, headaches, back, or shoulder pain. The study evaluated true acupuncture treatments in comparison to one of two alternatives: treatment as usual or sham acupuncture. The scientists concluded that the results of the analysis demonstrated that the specific effect of needling at true acupuncture points was statistically superior to sham needling. The authors also concluded that acupuncture was an effective and reasonable treatment option for the conditions evaluated.

A particular strength of this analysis was the large sample of patients studied and the rigorous exclusion criteria employed. This suggests that the significant effect of acupuncture was not likely due to study bias or sample size issues. Moreover, the effect size of acupuncture, when compared to other interventions such as usual care or ancillary care was also significant. Together this data strongly suggest that acupuncture should be an option for pain patients.

The study also revealed that these differences are relatively modest, suggesting that factors in addition to the specific effects of needling are also important contributors to the therapeutic effects of acupuncture. This confirms it is vital that consumers seek experienced and qualified acupuncturists for pain relief. “An acupuncture practitioner who is certified by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM®) and licensed in their state has the necessary education and training to effectively treat patients for chronic pain and other ailments”, states Dr. Kory Ward-Cook, NCCAOM Chief Executive Officer. “These competent practitioners will have the knowledge and skills to effectively treat pain as indicated by this important study.”

The embracement of complementary and alternative medicine such as acupuncture has steadily grown over the past several years. According to the 2007 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) conducted by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) and the Center for Disease Control's National Center for Health Statistics, adults in the United States spent \$33.9 billion out-of-pocket on visits to complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) practitioners and purchases of CAM products, classes, and materials for self-

care. “This study reinforces what thousands of physicians have declared and consumers have experienced for many years; acupuncture is medically effective for the treatment of chronic pain”, states Michael Jabbour, president of the American Association for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (AAAOM).

To seek a qualified and competent practitioner of acupuncture and Oriental medicine, the public is encouraged to utilize the Find a Practitioner directory of NCCAOM. The NCCAOM Directory can be accessed at www.nccaom.org

Link to the abstract of the study:

<http://archinte.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1357513>

Acupuncture for Chronic Pain Individual Patient Data Meta-analysis

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AAAOM: Formed in 1981 as the unifying force for the acupuncture and Oriental medicine (AOM) profession in the U.S., the AAAOM is dedicated to promoting ethical practice and high educational and regulatory standards for the licensure of American acupuncturists. The AAAOM members include individual practitioners, their small businesses, physicians, healthcare professionals, patients, and state professional associations. The AAAOM recognizes an emerging national standard for programmatic accreditation and qualifying examinations for licensure in states regulating acupuncture and Oriental medicine. For more information, visit <http://www.aaaomonline.org/>.

NCCAOM®: The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM)® is a non-profit organization based in Jacksonville, Florida established in 1982. Its mission is to establish, assess, and promote recognized standards of competence and safety in acupuncture and Oriental medicine for the protection and benefit of the public. The NCCAOM is the only national certification organization whose certification programs are accredited by the National Commission on Certifying

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If you would like more information about the AAAOM or NCCAOM®, please contact Mina Larson, Deputy Director, NCCAOM® at 703-314-2908 or Michael Jabbour, AAAOM President at mjabbour@aaaomonline.org.