

Acupuncture is helpful in knee osteoarthritis

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According to a study, acupuncture provides pain relief and improves functioning for those who have osteoarthritis of the knee.

Many people with arthritis say that acupuncture helps them. But scientific evidence has been hard to come by. Now a team at the University of Maryland, funded by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), shows that acupuncture really is effective in knee osteoarthritis.

A group of 190 patients with knee osteoarthritis received acupuncture and was compared to a similar group having sham acupuncture. This is a control procedure where acupuncture needles are inserted, but not at the 'real' acupuncture points. A third group was assigned to self-help for arthritis. All were receiving standard treatment of painkillers as well.

At eight weeks, those in the acupuncture group were reporting an improvement in functioning. And at week 14, a decrease in pain was noted. This was compared to the sham acupuncture and self help groups. NCCAM hope they can now establish acupuncture as a useful complement to standard therapy for arthritis.