

Acupuncture Low Back Pain Relief Findings Confirmed

Published by [Health CMI](#) on February 2021



Acupuncture is an effective medical intervention for patients suffering from lower back pain, according to researchers from Harvard Medical School (Boston), Georgetown University (Washington, DC), University of Arizona College of Medicine (Phoenix), and other medical institutions. The findings are based on an evidence-based systematic meta-analysis of numerous clinical trials. The research team adds that their determination is consistent with CDC Guidelines and the American College of Physicians (ACP), which conclude that acupuncture is a “first-line” medical procedure for the treatment of low back pain. [1]

The meta-analysis reviewed important studies, including a 2020 clinical trial of over 550 patients with chronic lower back pain. [2] That trial determined that patients using acupuncture experienced a significant decrease in pain intensity levels and suffered from less disability. Another investigation in the meta-analysis encompassed three systematic reviews of 54 randomized-controlled trials. The total patient sample size was over 26,270 patients. The researchers concluded that true acupuncture produces superior patient outcomes for patients with chronic lower back pain compared with usual care, sham acupuncture, and no treatment. [3]

Another study included in the meta-analysis had a patient group size of over 2,100. The research was completed in 2020 and encompassed clinical results from 1980 to 2016. The researchers determined that acupuncture is safe and effective for the treatment of both subacute and chronic lower back pain. [4] Additional investigations were reviewed in the comprehensive study by the researchers from Harvard, Georgetown, U. Arizona, Ain Shams University, Creighton University School of Medicine (Omaha), and other medical centers.

The research team determined that there are many variations in acupuncture techniques dependent upon individual diagnostics. Their findings suggest that there are no standards for acupuncture for the treatment of low back pain. This is a common misconception based on the idea that there are too many variables in treatment modalities within the field of acupuncture, including electroacupuncture, moxibustion, distal acupuncture, micro-acupuncture, and local acupuncture.

The reality is that there are many standards for the application of acupuncture, dependent upon the etiology of the lower back pain. This is outlined in the acupuncture continuing education course at HealthCMi.com entitled [Low Back Pain](#). The course covers acupuncture procedures appropriate for presentations including disc herniations, disc protrusions, spondylolisthesis, spinal stenosis, facet joint dysfunction, sacroiliac joint dysfunction, arthritis, and other causes of low back pain. Each of these etiologies determine specific acupuncture treatment protocols.

The HealthCMi lower back pain course provides concrete examples as to why there are varying acupuncture procedures based on individual diagnostics. For example, the application of Yaotongxue acupoints are specific to acute lumbar pain, especially strain and sprain. The course delves further into the two main Yaotongxue acupoints used in common clinical practice and an additional, lesser-known, third Yaotongxue acupoint. Yaotongxue points are also part of the Master Tung system of acupuncture, although referenced by different names in that specialized system.

HealthCMi published the low back pain acupuncture CEU course to elucidate specific standards in electroacupuncture settings based on modern research and other important standards. This includes when to apply ipsilateral acupuncture, contralateral acupuncture, local acupuncture, distal acupuncture, warm needle acupuncture, and more. At HealthCMi, we encourage the research community to understand that acupuncture is not limited to analgesic properties. Acupuncture balances parasympathetic tone and brain functional connectivity. [5] This often results in healing the underlying cause of low back pain.

Licensed acupuncturists are trained to treat the “root and symptom.” This phrase refers to choosing acupuncture protocols based on the exact needs of each patient at any given juncture. If a patient is experiencing severe low back pain, often the treatment is focused on symptomatic relief. However, once pain levels diminish, acupuncturists often increase the use of acupoints used to resolve the root underlying condition. This change in protocol is employed to produce lasting pain relief and reduce the incidence of flare-ups. Multiple protocols for acupuncture treatments is a strength and reflects an incredible depth to treatment specificity based on thousands of years of clinical histories and modern research.

References:

1. Uriits, Ivan, Jeffrey Kway Wang, Kristina Yancey, Mohammad Mousa, Jai Won Jung, Amnon A. Berger, Islam Mohammad Shehata, Amir Elhassan, Alan D. Kaye, and Omar

Viswanath. "Acupuncture for the Management of Low Back Pain." *Current Pain and Headache Reports* 25, no. 1 (2021): 1-10.

Author Affiliations:

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Department of Anesthesiology, Critical Care and Pain Medicine, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA.

Department of Anesthesiology, LSUHSC School of Medicine, Shreveport, LA.

Department of Anesthesiology, University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phoenix, Phoenix, AZ.

MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, Georgetown University School of Medicine, Washington, DC.

Department of Anesthesiology, Ain Shams University, Cairo.

Department of Anesthesiology, Desert Regional Medical Center, Palm Springs, California.

Department of Anesthesiology, Creighton University School of Medicine, Omaha, Nebraska.

Valley Pain Consultants – Envision Physician Services, Phoenix, AZ.

2. Luo Y, Yang M, Liu T, Zhong X, Tang W, Guo M, et al. Effect of hand-ear acupuncture on chronic low back pain: a randomized controlled trial. *J Tradit Chin Med.* 2019;39(4):587–98. Randomized-controlled trial of 152 non-medicated participants aged 18–50 y/o with a history of chronic low back pain for ≥ 3 months. Patients 54 received hand-ear acupuncture, 50 received standard acupuncture, 48 received usual care along with massage and physical therapy at each visit, 18 treatments over 7 weeks.

3. Wei X, Liu B, He L, Yang X, Zhou J, Zhao H, et al. Acupuncture therapy for chronic low back pain: protocol of a prospective, multi-center, registry study. *BMC Musculoskelet Disord.* 2019;20(1):1–10.

4. Yeganeh M, Baradaran HR, Qorbani M, Moradi Y, Dastgiri S. The effectiveness of acupuncture, acupressure and chiropractic interventions on treatment of chronic nonspecific low back pain in Iran: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Complement Ther Clin Pract.* 2017;27:11–8.

5. He, Tian, Wen Zhu, Si-Qi Du, Jing-Wen Yang, Fang Li, Bo-Feng Yang, Guang-Xia Shi, and Cun-Zhi Liu. "Neural mechanisms of acupuncture as revealed by fMRI studies." *Autonomic Neuroscience* (2015).