

# Depression and Insomnia Relieved By Acupuncture

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Acupuncture relieves depression. Research published in the *Journal of Science and Healing* finds acupuncture safe and effective as an adjunctive therapy for the treatment of depression. The researchers concluded that “acupuncture was an effective and safe therapy in treating major depressive disorders. Particularly, the qualities of sleep and life (involving emotions) in patients with depression and schizophrenia were found to be improved after

acupuncture treatment.”

The research focused on the effects of manual acupuncture. Electroacupuncture, laser acupuncture, and acupressure were excluded from the meta-analysis. The researchers note that the primary goal of the investigation was to “evaluate the effects of acupuncture treatment for patients with depression or schizophrenia through a systematic review.” The secondary goal was to assess acupuncture’s working mechanisms.

The researchers cite acupuncture’s ability to benefit sleep as an underlying mechanism for its effective therapeutic actions. The researchers cited Bosch et al. whose methodologies included the Pittsburg Sleep Quality Index as a method of evaluation. Bosch et al. “found a significant improvement of sleep quality” from acupuncture treatments for patients with depression or schizophrenia. Additional research employing objective measures of sleep improvement, including actigraphs, demonstrated sleep improvements from acupuncture treatments in patients with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorders. The improvements include reduced activity levels during sleep, less night awake time, ability to fall asleep faster, and less daytime sleepiness.

## Emotions

The researchers note that another mechanism by which acupuncture exerts its effective action is its ability to benefit emotions. Several key studies identified acupuncture’s ability to reduce anxiety and improve mood. The Beck Depression Inventory and the Hamilton Rating Scale were employed in the studies for purposes of evaluation. The researchers note, “A reduction of depressive symptoms was found after acupuncture therapy in patients with depression. Moreover, less anxiety and a better mood were found after acupuncture therapy in patients with schizophrenia.”

## Schizophrenia

The researchers note that acupuncture has beneficial effects that help to improve specific conditions of patients. Citing Block et al., the researchers note that “sleep was found to have been improved after acupuncture treatment in patients with schizophrenia; moreover, the patients with schizophrenia show less anxiety and an improved mood after acupuncture therapy.” The researchers add that studies demonstrate acupuncture’s ability to eliminate or decrease hallucinations with patients subsequently feeling “less disturbed.”

Acupuncture successfully reduces side effects from chronic consumption of schizophrenia medications. Acupuncture was found to reduce tardive dyskinesia. Involuntary movements “disappeared completely” and “the posture of the neck and body improved....” In an important finding, the researchers discovered that “a combined therapy of acupuncture and small doses of antipsychotics showed an efficacy equal to that for therapy using full doses of antipsychotics.....”



## Acupuncture Actions

The researchers note that the default mode network (DMN) is “a system of brain regions that is activated during rest or during passive viewing tasks, but is deactivated when cognitive tasks are performed.” They add that, in cases of depression, there is “a failure to normally down-regulate activity within the DMN.” They note that acupuncture potentially regulates the DMN and consequently improves the conditions of patients with depression or schizophrenia. They also cite research demonstrating acupuncture’s ability to modulate and normalize effects on the hypothalamus and that acupuncture may also regulate the limbic system.

### References:

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