



Research finds acupuncture effective AND cost-effective for back pain 10.04.2007

New research commissioned by the NHS Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme shows that acupuncture is not only beneficial for patients with lower back pain, but also can be cost effective in the longer term.

Research by the University of York² trialled over 240 patients under GP care, who either received NHS or acupuncture treatment from members of the British Acupuncture Council, over a two-year period. Acupuncture showed a more positive effect on patients with lower back pain between the 12-24 month trial period, where patients reported lower pain levels and a reduced use of pain killers. Some patients reported no pain at the end of the two year period.

Although the initial cost of acupuncture was more expensive compared to usual NHS care, separate research from the University of Sheffield³ confirmed that acupuncture was a more cost effective treatment in the longer term when quality-adjusted-life years (QUALY) was considered, as it provided more health benefits in terms of quantity and quality of life.

Back pain is the nation's leading cause of disability and one of the main reasons for work-related sickness absence. Affecting more than 1.1 million people, with 95% of patients suffering from lower back pain problems, the condition currently costs the NHS and community care services more than £1 billion each year, with £141 million a year spent on GP consultations¹.

How can acupuncture help?

Acupuncture is Chinese philosophical practice dating back 2,000 years where the patient is treated as a wholly as an individual as opposed to simply treating a patient's symptoms. Acupuncture follows the premise that our health is dependent on the body's motivating energy, known as qi (pronounced 'chi'), moving in a smooth and balanced way through a series of channels beneath the skin.

When the flow of qi is blocked, the stagnation causes pain and ill-health which may be relieved by needling points that clear the appropriate channels and restore free flow through the area concerned.



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Acupuncture can help back pain by:

- reducing the level of pain
- reducing the use of medication
- reducing the number of sick days taken
- reducing the time spent with GPs
- providing a more cost-effective treatment over a longer period of time

Statistics provided from HTA Spotlight: Acupuncture for back pain.

² Research available on www.bmj.com

³ Research available on www.bmj.com

<http://www.acupuncture.org.uk/content/news/news.asp?id=47>



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