

WHAT EVIDENCE EXISTS FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ACUPUNCTURE?

In 2017 "[The Acupuncture Evidence Project](#)" was commissioned by AACMA

it is the most thorough review of acupuncture that exists.

It focuses on examining the highest form of evidence available, systematic reviews and meta-analysis. The literature was sorted to find evidence on which conditions acupuncture was effective for and also its safety and cost-effectiveness. Of the 122 conditions treatable with acupuncture, it found strong evidence for the effectiveness of acupuncture for 8 conditions, moderate evidence supporting acupuncture for 38 conditions, weak positive/unclear evidence for acupuncture in 71 conditions and little or no evidence for 5 conditions. This means the further research is needed for the last two categories.

Cardiovascular/respiratory	Mental health	Gastrointestinal	Oncological
Hypertension (with medication)	Anxiety	Constipation	Chemotherapy-induced nausea & vomiting (CINV)
Asthma in adults	Pre-treatment anxiety	Irritable bowel syndrome	Cancer-related fatigue
Asthma in children	Depression	Obesity	Recovery after colorectal cancer resection
Angina pectoris	Insomnia	Dyspepsia in diabetic gastroparesis (DGP)	Aromatase-inhibitor-induced arthralgia
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)	Post-traumatic stress disorder	Functional dyspepsia	Cancer-related insomnia
Heart failure	Schizophrenia (with medication)	Inflammatory bowel disease	Cancer pain
Vascular cognitive impairment without dementia	Smoking cessation (up to 3 months)	Headaches	Hot flushes in breast cancer
Vascular dementia	Alzheimer's disease	Headache	Cancer-related psychological symptoms
Musculoskeletal	Chronic fatigue syndrome	Migraines	Xerostomia in cancer
Knee osteoarthritis pain	Opioid detoxification	Tension-type headache	Chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy
Chronic low back pain	Smoking cessation (6 months or more)	Genitourinary	Myelosuppression after chemotherapy
Acute low back pain	Alcohol dependence	Prostatitis pain/chronic pelvic pain syndrome	Eye, ear, nose, throat, mouth
Neck pain	Cocaine addiction	Chronic kidney disease	Allergic rhinitis
Lateral elbow pain	Gynaecological/obstetric	Erectile dysfunction	Dry eye
Plantar heel pain	Back or pelvic pain during pregnancy	Poor sperm quality	Glaucoma
Restless leg syndrome	Labour pain	Stress urinary incontinence in adults	Meniere's disease/syndrome
Sciatica	Menopausal hot flushes	Urinary incontinence	Sudden sensorineural hearing loss
Shoulder pain:	Perimenopausal and postmenopausal sleep disturbance	Surgical	Tinnitus
Shoulder impingement syndrome (SIS)	Dysmenorrhoea	Postoperative nausea & vomiting	Paediatric
Carpal tunnel syndrome	Hyperemesis gravidarum	Postoperative nausea and vomiting and pain after tonsillectomy	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
Fibromyalgia	Melasma	Postoperative pain	Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
Acute ankle sprain in adults	Induction of labour	Postoperative pain – back surgery	Hypoxic ischemic encephalopathy in neonates
Lumbar spinal stenosis	Assisted conception in ART	Postoperative pain – knee surgery	Mumps in children
Whiplash associated disorder (WAD)	Oocyte retrieval pain relief	Ambulatory anaesthesia	Slowing progression of myopia
Neurological	Polycystic ovarian syndrome	Craniotomy anaesthesia	Dermatological
Stroke	Premenstrual syndrome	Dentistry	Dermatology
Acute stroke	Primary ovarian insufficiency	Postoperative gastroparesis syndrome (PGS)	Atopic dermatitis
Stroke rehabilitation	Uterine fibroids	Postoperative ileus	Chronic urticaria
Post-stroke spasticity	Nausea in pregnancy	Evidence quality	Itch
Post-stroke insomnia		Positive effect	Psoriasis vulgaris
Post-stroke shoulder pain		Potential positive effect	Miscellaneous
Post-stroke hiccoughs		Unclear	Acupuncture in Emergency Department
Bell's palsy		No evidence of effect	Exercise performance & post-exercise recovery
Parkinson's disease			Fatigue in systemic lupus erythematosus
Epilepsy			Primary Sjogren's syndrome
			Sensory perception

McDonald and Janz state “It has been estimated that there is a 17-year time lag in translating clinical research into clinical practice^[i] During this time patients are being deprived of the benefit of a proven therapy. Health policy makers now have eight clear conditions associated with a significant burden of disease where acupuncture should be integrated into current clinical guidelines without further delay” ^[ii].

Sources:

^[i] Morris ZS, Wooding S, Grant J. The answer is 17 years, what is the question: understanding time lags in translational research. Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine. 2011 Dec;104(12):510-20.

^[ii] McDonald J, Janz S. The Acupuncture Evidence Project: A Comparative Literature Review (Revised Edition). Brisbane: Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association Ltd; 2017. <http://www.acupuncture.org.au>.