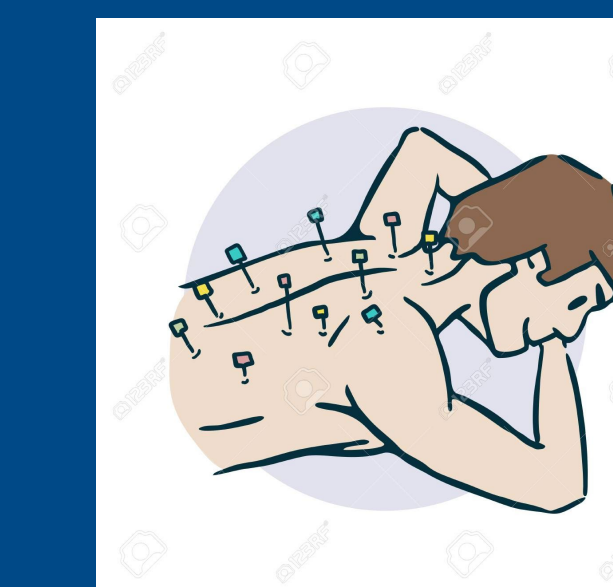




Use of Acupuncture to Manage Chronic Pain and Decrease Use of Opioids



Background and Significance

40-70% of chronic pain (lasting longer than 3-6 months) patients were listed as not receiving adequate management, meaning that their pain levels are still not controlled appropriately and are at increased risk for opioid use disorder.

Research Evidence Summary

- The use of acupuncture is most useful for chronic pain in the upper body for treatment of headaches, upper extremity pain, lower back pain, and osteoarthritis.
- Patients continued to experience up to 90% of the benefits of the acupuncture treatment up to 12 months later, with only an approximate decrease of 15% of treatment effect.
- Documented decrease of 45% in opioid prescriptions in a military population utilizing acupuncture as adjunct therapy.

Steps Taken to Implement Practice Change

- Patients that qualify: chronic headaches, upper extremity pain, lower back pain, and osteoarthritis treated with opioids.
- Referral to acupuncture therapy for adjunct pain management with patient approval.
- Education is also implemented to increase reduction in opioid usage.



Results

Devitt, M (2018)	The effects of acupuncture were persistent over time, persisting up to 12 months after the treatment, benefits cannot be explained away by placebo effect
Eshkevari, L. (2017).	Acupuncture has shown to be a beneficial addition to a practitioners treatment options, different types of pain respond to different levels of acupuncture
Frank, J. W et al (2017)	3 good-quality and 11 fair-quality studies emphasized self- management strategies and nonpharmacologic methods of reducing opioid therapy.
Hah, J. M., et.al 2017).	Opioids should be given only acutely for pain during surgery. Other pain relief such as NSAIDs, acetaminophen, ketamine, and topical nerve blockades should be combined and recommended after surgery to decrease opioid dependence.
Lin, Y., et. al (2017)	For chronic lower back pain, evidence consistently demonstrated that acupuncture provides short-term clinically relevant benefits for pain relief and functional improvement compared with no treatment or acupuncture plus another conventional intervention.
Linde, K.,et al. (2009).	After reviewing the information from the systematic review, there is consistent evidence that acupuncture provides additional benefit to treatment of acute migraine attacks only or to routine care. There is also evidence that it can be used prophylactically to prevent future attacks.
Liu, L., et al.(2015).	Systematic reviews showed that acupuncture when used alone or together with conventional therapy does give short term improvement in pain and function for chronic back pain treatment
MacPherson, H., et. al (2017).	The benefits of acupuncture treatments are still 90% effective after 12 months after treatment.
Mehl-Madrona, L. et al. (2016).	CAM therapies helped patients reduce opiate use. compared with patients in conventional care. While resistant to CAM therapies initially, the majority of patients came to accept and to appreciate their usefulness. GMVs were useful for incorporating non-reimbursed CAM therapies into primary medical care.
Montgomery, A. D., & Ottenbacher, R.	This study supported a positive impact on the overall scoring of pain immediately after acupuncture, the same effects were not seen long term effect with respect to managing chronic pain and reducing use of opioid medication through use of BFA (2020). The authors of this study felt more research was needed in order to evaluate the long term efficacy of acupuncture in patients with chronic pain (Montgomery & Ottenbacher, 2020).
Vickers, A. J., et al. (2017).	Acupuncture was found to be superior to both sham and no acupuncture control for each of the patient conditions listed. They also found that the effects of acupuncture persist over time with a small decrease of about 15% in effect of treatment a year.

Barriers to Implementation

- Lack of clinical guidelines for providers
- Need for more structured, RCT evaluating the efficacy in reducing opioid use with acupuncture long term. Most studies support short term benefits only.
- Need for better quality studies overall (I.e. variability in approach and size).
- Costly to patient since treatment is typically ongoing.
- Discomfort from treatment.
- Time consuming for provider if done within the practice.

Analysis of Potential Pt Outcomes

- Significant decrease in levels of pain (utilizing the numeric pain scale) over a year.
- Decrease in the use of prescription opioids used to treat chronic pain over the course of a year.
- Need to return for further therapy in a year.

Recommendations for Practice, Education, Future Research

- New policies and staff education should be implemented in hospitals to encourage referral to acupuncture as a first-line intervention
- Use of acupuncture may help reduce fall risk in the elderly
- Need more research on the ability of acupuncture to reduce opiate consumption
- Need long term studies to determine if effects of acupuncture on chronic pain can be sustained over a 5 year period