

AACP
(Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists)

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COMMENT ON NEW 'NICE' GUIDANCE FOR ACUPUNCTURE

A report that the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) will today (27 May 2009) publish new guidelines that enable the NHS to promote acupuncture, structured exercise and manual therapy for low back pain was welcomed by the largest group of health professionals practising acupuncture, the Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists (AACP).

Merian Denning, chair of the AACP says,

“Physiotherapists who are members of the AACP have integrated acupuncture, manual therapy and exercise in the management of back pain, along with many other conditions, since the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) agreed that acupuncture was within the scope of clinical practice in 1985.

“The AACP welcome these NICE guidelines that recognise the evidence and clinical effectiveness for acupuncture when used alongside exercise and manual interventions for the management of musculoskeletal conditions.

“Both patients and GPs recognise the value of multiple interventions in order to address the multiple factors of chronic back pain; there are now more than 5,500 members of the AACP using acupuncture within their practice.

“While westernised randomised clinical trials of acupuncture have not provided unequivocal evidence of its success, this does not rule out the efficacy of acupuncture.

“Methodological shortcomings have been cited by various reviewers of acupuncture studies as reasons for inconclusive evidence of its efficacy in the treatment of low back pain. (1) However, higher quality evidence of the efficacy of acupuncture in alleviating back pain is steadily amassing.

“In a UK study of a short course of acupuncture for chronic low back pain acupuncture gave a small but lasting benefit compared to usual care. (2)

“From Germany, the GERAC trial, thus far the largest world wide acupuncture trial showed that both sham and true acupuncture were more effective than conventional treatment in treating lower back pain. (3)

“In the last few weeks, a US study comparing acupuncture and conventional treatment of chronic low back pain has shown that acupuncture was more effective in producing a lasting benefit and improved functional outcome. While the trial has proved the superior clinical effectiveness of acupuncture it has also shown that the mechanism of action remains poorly understood and that various methods of acupuncture point stimulation appear to be reasonable options. (4)

“The results of these trials have important implications for key stakeholders, clinicians and patients seeking a relatively safe and effective treatment for a condition for which conventional treatments are often ineffective and for whom conventional treatment by medication may have potential adverse effects.

“As NICE prepares to publish its guidance on the treatment of low back pain the inclusion of acupuncture as part of an integrated treatment is based on the current body of scientific evidence. AACP embrace this evidenced based approach and will continue to support its members to be able to provide this treatment as part of an integrated package of care.”

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists (AACP) is the largest group of health professionals practising acupuncture in the UK with over 5,500 members.

AACP is a Clinical Interest Group (CIG) of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP). Its principal aim is the integration of acupuncture into physiotherapy practice for the treatment of pain and systemic illness.

For further details, see www.aacp.uk.com

REFERENCES

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- (3) Michael Haake, Hans-Helge Müller, Carmen Schade-Brittinger, Heinz D Basler, et al. *Archives of Internal Medicine*. Chicago: Sep 24, 2007. Vol. 167, Iss. 17; pg. 1892)
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