

# Hebden Bridge Acupuncture Centre Patient Information Sheet

## Latest Research

### ACUPUNCTURE/ACUPRESSURE AND BACK PAIN

A landmark study has been published by the British Medical Journal on the treatment of lower back pain by acupuncture. 241 adults were randomly assigned to receive either standard care or ten acupuncture treatments and asked to record pain levels, use of pain medication and satisfaction with treatment. Although there was only a non-significant benefit for acupuncture at 12-months follow-up, compared to controls, by 24 months this difference had become significant. At three months, the acupuncture group were significantly more likely to say that they were "very satisfied" with their treatment than the standard care group, and at 24 months were more likely to report reduced worry about their back pain. The study team conclude that although the differences in pain scores between groups were small, they represent a clinically worthwhile benefit and can be viewed as a 'moderate' effect and that further research is needed to investigate the value of repeated courses of acupuncture for patients experiencing recurrent episodes of low back pain. (Randomised controlled trial of a short course of traditional acupuncture compared with usual care for persistent non-specific low back pain. **BMJ, Sep 2006**; doi:10.1136/bmj.38878.907361.7C). In a separate paper, the same researchers looked at the cost effectiveness of acupuncture for lower back pain. Although total costs during the two-year study period were higher on average for the acupuncture group than for the usual care group, the cost in terms of quality adjusted life years (QALYs) gained was well below the lower threshold of £20,000 used by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) to decide whether the NHS can afford to pay for a health technology. (A randomised controlled trial of acupuncture care for persistent low back pain: cost effectiveness analysis. **BMJ, Sep 2006**; doi:10.1136/bmj.38932.806134.7C).

A Taiwanese study has compared the effects of acupressure (six treatments) with standard physical therapy (including pelvic manual traction, spinal manipulation, thermotherapy, infrared light therapy, electrical stimulation and exercise therapy) for the treatment of lower back pain. 129 patients with chronic lower back pain were assigned randomly to one of the two treatment groups. The acupressure group experienced 89% greater relief of disability compared to the physical therapy group, and the benefit lasted at follow-up six months later. The acupressure group also reported greater improvement in leg pain, interference of pain with normal work and days off from work or school. (Lisa Li-Chen Hsieh et al. treatment of low back pain by acupressure and physical therapy: randomised controlled trial. **BMJ, Mar 2006**; 332: 696-700).

An analysis of Canadian patients who had self-referred for low back pain (LBP), found that they made significantly fewer visits to their physician for LBP care in the year following treatment (1.55 versus 4.45 in 1999, 1.41 in 2001) compared to LBP sufferers who had not received acupuncture. They consequently required significantly less physician expenditure (around 25% of the cost of LBP care in the general population). (12<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Complementary Health Care, 19-21 **September 2005**, Exeter, UK).

### How We Can Help

At the **Hebden Bridge Acupuncture Centre** we offer a combined therapeutic approach to the treatment of including acupuncture, dietary and lifestyle advice, and simple breathing exercises (Qi Gong) to promote the body's own natural healing processes.

For more information on how we can help you please contact us:

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