

Acupuncture for Back Pain: Evaluating Patient Outcomes and Their Determinants Key Facts About This Study

What do we want to do?

- We want to find out whether psychological factors can predict treatment outcomes in acupuncture for back pain.

Why do we want to do it?

- We know that psychological factors predict treatment outcomes in other treatments for back pain, but we know very little about this specifically in relation to acupuncture treatment.
- While some work has been done in this area before, it has been limited by small samples and a focus on only a small number of potentially relevant psychological factors.

What is special about this study?

- Our study will be the first large-scale study designed specifically to evaluate whether a large number of factors predict acupuncture outcomes for people with back pain in the context of everyday clinical practice across a range of settings including NHS pain clinics and Physiotherapy departments and private acupuncture clinics.

What is involved for participants?

- Participants will be asked to complete a number of validated questionnaires, and will also have the opportunity to take part in in-depth qualitative interviews about their experiences.

What is involved for clinicians?

- We really need your help to reach our target of 500 participants!
- We are asking people who use acupuncture with back pain patients to send out our questionnaire packs to all eligible new patients/clients. Eligible individuals who want to take part would then reply to us directly.
- ***When you recruit patients into this study we will send you a small gift voucher to thank you.***

When will the research start?

- We have now received funding for this study from the Arthritis Research Campaign.
- We have received full ethics approval from Southampton and South West Hampshire Research Ethics Committee A, to carry out the study at sites across the UK.
- We have recently started recruiting patients from participating acupuncturists.

How can you find out more?

- Please contact Dr Felicity Bishop if you would like to know more about any aspect of this study or if you would like to register your interest in helping us to recruit participants.
 - Write to: Dr Felicity Bishop, Complementary & Integrated Medicine Research, Primary Medical Care, School of Medicine, University of Southampton, Aldermoor Health Centre, Aldermoor Close, Southampton, SO16 5ST.
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Scientific Abstract

Back pain has severe consequences and affects 36% of the UK population. Acupuncture is a popular and effective back pain treatment, but its mechanism is poorly understood. This research develops psychological theory to investigate the determinants of patient outcomes of acupuncture for back pain. Much research has been done looking at the role of psychological factors in conventional multidisciplinary treatments for back pain, but this has not been well-researched in acupuncture contexts. The purpose is to improve our understanding of the psychological mechanisms involved in recovery from back pain and to hopefully offer some potential new and applicable insights to the field. A prospective postal longitudinal questionnaire study will test theoretically grounded hypotheses concerning the predictors of outcome in acupuncture. We hope to recruit 500 people who are having acupuncture for back pain in a number of different settings (private practice, NHS, 5-elements, physiotherapy etc.). We will ask each participant to fill in a number of validated questionnaires assessing their thoughts about their back pain, about acupuncture, and about their health and wellbeing in general. We will ask participants to fill in these questionnaires before they first see their acupuncturist, after their first consultation, and then 3 and 6 months later. This will enable us to see how different beliefs are related to each other at different time-points and to evaluate whether beliefs are related to outcomes. A nested qualitative interview study will analyse patients' individual experiences of acupuncture. Some participants from the questionnaire study will be asked to take part in one-to-one in-depth interviews about their experiences of acupuncture for back pain. This will help us to understand, from patients' perspectives, any changes that occur in relation to their treatment.