

# HEALTH REPORT

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## NEW STUDY RECOGNIZES ACUPUNCTURE AS EFFECTIVE TREATMENT FOR PAIN OF OSTEOARTHRITIS

A landmark study published in *The Annals of Internal Medicine* and funded by the National Institutes of Health has finally provided objective proof that Acupuncture provides real hope and help for those suffering from osteoarthritis.

The study team enrolled 570 patients aged 50 or older with osteoarthritis of the knee. Participants were randomly assigned to receive one of three treatments: Acupuncture, sham acupuncture, or participation in a control group that followed the Arthritis Foundation's self-help course for managing their condition.

On joining the study, patients' pain and knee function were assessed using standard arthritis research survey instruments and standard measurement tools. Patients' progress was assessed at 4, 8, 14, and 26 weeks. By week 8, participants receiving Acupuncture were showing a significant increase in function and by week 14 a significant decrease in pain, compared with the sham and control groups. These results held through week 26. Overall, those who received Acupuncture had a 40% decrease in pain and a nearly 40% improvement in function compared to baseline assessments.

"For the first time, a clinical trial with sufficient rigor, size, and duration has shown that Acupuncture reduces the pain and functional impairment of osteoarthritis of the knee," said National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine Director Stephen E. Straus, D.C. "These results also indicate that Acupuncture can serve as an effective addition to a standard regimen of care and improve quality of life for knee osteoarthritis sufferers.

"More than 20 million Americans have osteoarthritis. This disease is one of the most frequent causes of physical disability among adults," said Stephen I. Katz, M.D., Ph.D., National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases Director. "Thus, seeking an effective means of decreasing osteoarthritis pain and increasing function is of critical importance."

SOURCE:<http://nccam.nih.gov/news/2004/acu-osteo/pressrelease.htm>

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## LARGE STUDY CONFIRMS BENEFITS OF ACUPUNCTURE FOR OSTEOARTHRITIS

Studies have previously been done that point to the benefits of Acupuncture treatments for Osteoarthritis (OA) patients. Now, one of the largest studies done to date on the subject provides confirming evidence of the impact Acupuncture can have on enhancing a patient's mobility and their quality of life.

Researchers at the University Medical Center of Berlin, Germany, recently concluded a study that involved 3,553 patients treated and followed over a 3-year period. The patients were divided into three groups: 322 immediately received up to 15 sessions of Acupuncture in the initial 3-month period; 310 who received no Acupuncture for the first 3 months; and an additional 2,921 (those who did not consent to randomization) who received the same treatment as the Acupuncture group.

“Patients with chronic pain due to OA of the knee or the hip who were treated with Acupuncture in addition to routine care showed significant improvements in symptoms and quality of life compared with patients who received routine care alone,” the authors state.

It was one of the largest randomized trials of Acupuncture to date. Based in part on these results, the German Federal Committee of Physicians and Health Insurers is considering a proposal that Acupuncture be reimbursed by state health insurance funds.

The additional benefit of the study points to the reduced need for using powerful anti-inflammatory drugs to treat Osteoarthritis. This will serve to eliminate many of the side effects often reported by patients who have to use these drugs.

The authors concluded that, “The present results show that, in patients with chronic pain due to OA of the knee or hip who were receiving routine primary care, the addition of Acupuncture to the treatment regimen resulted in a clinically relevant and persistent benefit.” The results were reported in the publication *Arthritis & Rheumatism*.