

Fighting fatigue: Acupuncture to be trialled for cancer patients

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Women being treated for breast cancer who are experiencing fatigue are invited to join a clinical trial to determine if acupuncture could alleviate their symptoms.

Associate Professor Caroline Smith, from the University of Western Sydney's Complementary Medicine Research Centre (CompleMED) says fatigue during cancer treatments is common.

"Up to 99 percent of people report a lack of energy during their [cancer treatment](#)," says Associate Professor Smith.

"Up to 40 percent continue to experience fatigue for many years after their cancer treatment has concluded."

Associate Professor Smith says adjuvant chemotherapy has increased the survival rate for cancer patients in the last 20 years, but it can be associated with multiple side effects which can include nausea, vomiting and fatigue.

"Treating cancer related fatigue usually includes ruling out causes such as [anaemia](#), but often no specific cause or adequate treatment is found," she says.

"Acupuncture has shown promise for treating cancer related fatigue in small scale trials overseas and this pilot trial - if successful - will help lay the foundation for a future large scale clinical trial."

Acupuncture is a method used in Traditional Chinese Medicine which involves the insertion of very fine sterile acupuncture needles into specific points on the body.

Women participating in the six week trial will be randomly selected to receive the acupuncture treatment, or receive a 'placebo' or 'fake' non-reactive treatment, or be assigned to the control group and not receive treatment at all.

At the end of the trial, those in the control group may choose to receive a course of acupuncture treatment.

The trial is open to women aged 18 to 70 years who have been diagnosed with [breast cancer](#); have completed treatment at least one month before the trial; and are currently experiencing moderate levels of [fatigue](#).

Those in the acupuncture or placebo [acupuncture](#) treatment groups will be required to attend a clinic at the UWS Campbelltown campus or at another Sydney location.

At the conclusion of each treatment session participants will be asked to complete a short questionnaire. At the end of the trial a selection of participants will be interviewed to provide greater insight into the effects of the trial on their health and well being.

The clinical trial will be conducted in collaboration with Professor Jane Ussher and Associate Professor Janette Perz both from the UWS School of Psychology.

Provided by University of Western Sydney

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