

Chronic depression patients pick acupuncture over counseling

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(HealthDay) -- Patients with depression can be recruited from primary care to compare acupuncture with counseling and general practitioner (GP) care, according to a study published in the April issue of *CNS Neurosciences & Therapeutics*.

In order to develop a pragmatic trial with better model validity and credibility than previous trials in this field, Sylvia Schroer, Ph.D., of the University of York in the United Kingdom, and colleagues compared counseling and GP care with [acupuncture](#) using interviews, a consensus study of practitioners, and a five-arm pilot trial.

The researchers found that patients interested in using acupuncture and participating in a trial were likely to have long-standing, severe illness

that partially responded or did not respond to conventional treatments. Pilot trial participants were primarily severely depressed (87.5 percent), chronically ill (60 percent had three or more previous episodes), used medications, and had high levels of comorbidity. For participants, acupuncture was viewed as being as credible as GP care and more credible than counseling. The majority of patients (62.5 percent) preferred to be allocated to acupuncture, rating it at baseline as potentially being more able to benefit their [depression](#) than counseling or usual GP care. There were disparities in the working models of acupuncturists and counselors that suggested inherent differences between interventions in terms of the process, intended potential outcomes of therapy, and interaction between patients and therapists.

"A pilot trial has indicated that it is feasible, using a database method, to effectively recruit individuals from [primary care](#) into a study where acupuncture is compared with counseling and usual GP care," the authors write.

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