

# Complementary and alternative medicine studied in Swedish surgical care

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Osteopathy may help reduce chronic pain and stiffness after thoracic surgery. However, electrotherapy is not effective pain treatment in the aftermath of pancreatic surgery. These are the findings of a thesis from Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, that studied complementary and alternative therapies.

Massage, acupuncture, healing, [homeopathy](#): use of so-called [complementary and alternative medicine](#) is widespread in Sweden and the rest of the western world.

Although still skeptical, surgical healthcare professionals also want to learn more about these methods. These are the findings of a thesis from Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg.

In two studies, clinical nurse specialist Kristofer Bjerså examined the understanding of healthcare professionals regarding complementary and alternative therapies in the context of surgical care at Sweden's seven university hospitals. The findings show that personnel consider it important to know about these methods, and that skepticism still exists alongside a desire to learn more.

Kristofer Bjerså and his colleagues also studied two therapies for postoperative care. One study tested transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) as a complementary pain control method after pancreatic surgery.

"This concerns major [abdominal surgery](#) that requires sophisticated pain control in the aftermath, but according to our study, TENS was not effective. In fact, the method posed an obstacle for patients and healthcare personnel, because patients had trouble getting in and out of bed freely due to the extra wires attached to their bodies."

Another study tested osteopathic treatment to relieve pain, [stiffness](#) and respiratory limitations in patients who had undergone surgery of the oesophagus through thoracotomy ([incision](#) between the ribs). In the study, eight patients received 45 minutes of osteopathic treatment per week for 10 weeks.

"People who have had thoracotomies typically experience long-term chronic pain in the chest. Our study suggests that osteopathic therapy after a thoracotomy may be effective, but more and larger studies are necessary before any recommendations can be made," says Kristofer Bjerså.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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