

One in 10 women with a chronic condition turns to acupuncture

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Credit: Flickr/Tomás Fano

The ancient remedies of Chinese medicine and acupuncture are important elements of the health care choices made by women of varying ages, new research has shown.

The Australian Research Centre for Complementary and Integrative Medicine found women with chronic conditions, such as [chronic fatigue syndrome](#), low iron levels and arthritis, were more likely to use the two

alternative treatments.

The centre, which is part of the UTS Faculty of Health, surveyed more than 17,000 women over a 12-month period in preparing its report, published today in *Acupuncture in Medicine*.

Among "young" (aged 34-39) and "middle-aged" (aged 62-67) women, 9.5 per cent and 6.2 percent respectively admitted to consulting an acupuncturist; 5.7 per cent and 4 per cent respectively had used Chinese medicine.

Centre director and report co-author Professor Jon Adams said the research was important in providing a first examination of the prevalence and predictors of [acupuncture](#) and Chinese medicine use among women in Australia.

"Our research shows the level of use of these health care services is substantial," he said.

"It's important that all involved in assessing treatments as well as in health care planning, policy and practice be mindful of the complementary treatment options that may be popular among women.

"Critical public health has a significant role to play in ensuring this important area of health and health care receive rigorous and scientific scrutiny."

Other findings showed Chinese medicine and acupuncture to be strongly aligned with healthy lifestyle choices: non-smokers were significant users within the middle-aged group. Among the young cohort, women were more likely to have private health insurance and to live in urban areas.

Survey subjects who were married or in a de facto relationship were less likely to use Chinese medicine compared to their single counterparts, while those with private health insurance were 1.65 times more likely to use the treatment compared to those without.

Among users of Chinese medicine from the young cohort, a large proportion had been diagnosed with endometriosis, low iron levels, anxiety disorder and/or chronic fatigue syndrome.

Women in the middle-aged cohort who consulted an acupuncturist were more likely to have low iron levels, anxiety disorder, depression, [chronic fatigue](#) syndrome and/or arthritis when compared to women who had not consulted.

More information: Lu Yang et al. Prevalence and factors associated with the use of acupuncture and Chinese medicine: results of a nationally representative survey of 17 161 Australian women, *Acupuncture in Medicine* (2017). [DOI: 10.1136/acupmed-2016-011179](https://doi.org/10.1136/acupmed-2016-011179)

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