Study shows acupuncture can reduce methadone dose, opioid craving

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For individuals with opioid use disorder receiving methadone maintenance treatment (MMT), eight weeks of acupuncture is superior to sham acupuncture for reducing methadone dose and opioid craving,
according to a study published online July 9 in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Liming Lu, M.D., from the Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine in China, and colleagues examined the efficacy of acupuncture versus sham acupuncture on methadone dose reduction in a multicenter, randomized controlled trial conducted in six MMT clinics in China.

Participants were aged 65 years or younger with opioid use disorder, had been using MMT for at least six weeks, and were randomly assigned to receive acupuncture or sham acupuncture three times per week for eight weeks (60 and 58 participants, respectively).

The researchers found that more patients reduced their methadone dose 20 percent or more with acupuncture than sham acupuncture at week eight (62 versus 29 percent). In addition, compared with sham acupuncture, acupuncture was more effective for reducing opioid craving, with a mean difference of −11.7 mm on the visual analog scale.

"Although further research is needed to measure long-term clinical outcomes and to determine how acupuncture can best be incorporated into a comprehensive substance misuse treatment program, we believe these findings support the consideration of acupuncture for methadone reduction for persons who are receiving MMT," the authors write.


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