

Trial tests effectiveness of treatments for chronic neck pain

April 20 2012, By Caron Lett

People with chronic neck pain in the York area are being offered the chance to take part in a major clinical trial into the effectiveness of Alexander Technique lessons and acupuncture sessions.

Run by the University of York and funded by a grant of £720,000 from Arthritis Research UK, the ATLAS trial will look at the effectiveness of the techniques in alleviating neck pain compared with normal GP care.

York GP practices are contacting patients who have previously seen their GP with [chronic neck pain](#), inviting them to take part in the study.

The year-long study which is run by the Complementary Medicine Research Group in the University's Department of Health Sciences in conjunction with the York Trials Unit, will recruit up to 500 patients in York, Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester.

Chronic neck pain is a common condition in the adult population. As well as being painful and disabling, it is associated with significant costs to the individual, their families, the NHS and society in general.

The optimal care for uncomplicated neck pain has not been established. The research aims to determine how effective Alexander Technique lessons and acupuncture are for chronic [neck pain](#) when used as an addition to standard GP care. Researchers will look at how these two interventions compare with normal GP care and how they compare with each other. In addition, they will be looking at how the costs of the two

interventions compare.

Selected at random, a third of participants will receive 20 free Alexander Technique lessons in addition to continuing their usual GP care; a third will receive 12 free acupuncture sessions in addition to continuing their usual GP care and a third will continue with usual GP care only. Both the Alexander Technique lessons and [acupuncture](#) sessions will be carried out by qualified practitioners.

The ATLAS trial is led by Dr Hugh MacPherson, a Senior Research Fellow in the University of York's Department of Health Sciences. He said: "Our research will provide data which will help patients, practitioners, providers and policy-makers make informed choices about care. If the evidence from the new trial justifies it, then both interventions should be offered routinely as referral options to patients within the NHS, which would mean that patients would no longer have to pay for these interventions themselves."

More information: At the end of the study, the University of York will publish the findings on its website at www.york.ac.uk/healthsciences/research/trials.htm

Provided by University of York

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