Acupuncture for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

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About CADTH: CADTH is an independent, not-for-profit organization responsible for providing Canada’s health care decision-makers with objective evidence to help make informed decisions about the optimal use of drugs, medical devices, diagnostics, and procedures in our health care system.

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Questions or requests for information about this report can be directed to requests@cadth.ca
Key Message
We found 1 systematic review about the clinical effectiveness of acupuncture for people with posttraumatic stress disorder.

Research Question
What is the clinical effectiveness of acupuncture for people with posttraumatic stress disorder?

Methods

Literature Search Methods
An information specialist conducted a literature search on key resources including MEDLINE, PsycInfo, the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, the International HTA Database, the websites of Canadian and major international health technology agencies, as well as a focused internet search. The search approach was customized to retrieve a limited set of results, balancing comprehensiveness with relevancy. The search strategy comprised both controlled vocabulary, such as the National Library of Medicine’s MeSH (Medical Subject Headings), and keywords. Search concepts were developed based on the elements of the research questions and selection criteria. The main search concepts were acupuncture and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The search was completed on May 12, 2023, and limited to English-language documents published since January 1, 2018. Internet links were provided, where available.

Selection Criteria and Summary Methods
One reviewer screened literature search results (titles and abstracts) and selected publications according to the inclusion criteria presented in Table 1. Full texts of study publications were not reviewed. The Overall Summary of Findings was based on information available in the abstracts of selected publications.

Table 1: Selection Criteria

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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>People with posttraumatic stress disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Acupuncture, including needle and electroacupuncture (as adjunctive or monotherapy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comparator</td>
<td>No treatment (e.g., waitlist, sham therapy), usual care (e.g., psychotherapy, pharmacotherapy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Clinical benefits (e.g., psychological symptoms, function, quality of life, patient satisfaction) and harms (e.g., adverse events)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study designs</td>
<td>Health technology assessments, systematic reviews, randomized controlled trials, nonrandomized studies</td>
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Acupuncture for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
Results
We found 1 systematic review about the clinical effectiveness of acupuncture for people with PTSD.\textsuperscript{1} We did not identify any relevant health technology assessments, randomized controlled trials, or nonrandomized studies.

Additional references of potential interest that did not meet the inclusion criteria are provided in Appendix 1.

Overall Summary of Findings
The systematic review we identified found that acupuncture resulted in better improvement of PTSD symptoms in adults post intervention and at a longer follow up compared to comparators.\textsuperscript{1} The systematic review did not identify a significant difference between acupuncture and comparators on sleep quality and symptoms of depression and anxiety.\textsuperscript{1} Additionally, the study suggests little risk of serious adverse events with acupuncture.\textsuperscript{1}
References

Health Technology Assessments
No literature identified.

Systematic Reviews

Randomized Controlled Trials
No literature identified.

Nonrandomized Studies
No literature identified.
Appendix 1: References of Potential Interest

Previous CADTH Reports


Systematic Reviews
Unclear Comparator


Protocol

Randomized Controlled Trials
Protocol – Acupuncture for Combat Related PTSD

Alternative Population – Veterans with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury and PTSD

Nonrandomized Studies
Alternative Population – Soldiers with Chronic Pain and PTSD

Case Reports


Before and After

Review Articles


Additional References

Scoping Review Protocol – Acupuncture for Military Veterans with PTSD

Evidence Repository

Article

Clinical Handbook