



CLINICAL CARE

## Migraine Relief: It's Time for Acupuncture

Editorial Staff

Nearly one in four U.S. households contains a migraine sufferer, according to the Migraine Research Foundation, and more than 4 million people suffer chronic migraines, experiencing at least 15 migraine days per month. While many people take over-the-counter pain and prescriptions pain relievers for migraine, a [new study](#) published in the *British Medical Journal* adds to the evidence supporting the value of acupuncture as an effective, nonpharmaceutical alternative.

The study<sup>1</sup> included 147 migraine patients at seven hospitals in China. All patients lacked any previous exposure to acupuncture. After a four-week assessment period, patients were randomized to receive 20 sessions of acupuncture or sham acupuncture; or "usual care," including advice on lifestyle and self-management, over the next eight weeks. Sham acupuncture involved non-penetrating needles, delivered to non-acupuncture points.



Participants suffered 5.97 migraine days per month, on average, upon entry to the study. Over 12 weeks of follow-up (weeks 13-24), patients in the manual acupuncture group enjoyed a lower rate of daily migraines compared to the sham acupuncture group; while the usual care group experienced more migraine days than even the placebo (sham) group. Specifically, acupuncture recipients experienced 1.4 fewer migraine days than sham acupuncture recipients from weeks 13-16, and 2.1 fewer migraine days from weeks 17-20.

The researchers concluded: "Twenty sessions of manual acupuncture was superior to sham acupuncture and usual care for the prophylaxis of episodic migraine without aura. These results support the use of manual acupuncture in patients who are reluctant to use prophylactic drugs or when prophylactic drugs are ineffective, and it should be considered in future guidelines."

### *Reference*

1. Xu S, et al. Manual acupuncture versus sham acupuncture and usual care for prophylaxis of episodic migraine without aura: multicentre, randomised clinical trial. *BMJ*, 25 Mar 2020 (epub ahead of print).

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