



RESEARCH ROUNDS

## Acupuncture for Alcohol Withdrawal

Editorial Staff

Whether a steady drinker or an alcoholic, symptoms of withdrawal can range from mild to serious, with the more serious symptoms including hallucinations, delusions, seizures, high blood pressure and fever. Even the milder consequences - anxiety, headache, nausea and vomiting, etc. - are concerning, which makes effective treatment strategies (particularly natural options that don't involve medication) paramount.

New research by Suchan Chang, et al., suggests acupuncture may hold promising potential for treating symptoms of alcohol withdrawal. In the study, published in *Science Advances*, researchers fed ethanol to rats continuously for more than two weeks, producing an addictive state.

When ethanol feeding was discontinued, the rats began experiencing typical alcohol withdrawal symptoms; however, these symptoms were reduced significantly in rats receiving acupuncture. Withdrawal symptoms continued at their original intensity in rats who did not receive acupuncture.

In their abstract, the researchers explain why acupuncture may reduce alcohol withdrawal symptoms and the specific acupoint that could be utilized:



"A withdrawal-associated impairment in *B*-endorphin neurotransmission in the arcuate nucleus (ARC) of the hypothalamus is associated with alcohol dependence characterized by a chronic relapsing disorder. Although acupuncture activates *B*-endorphin neurons in the ARC projecting to the nucleus accumbens (NAc), a role for ARC *B*-endorphin neurons in alcohol dependence and acupuncture effects has not been examined. Here, we show that acupuncture at Shenmen (HT7) points attenuates behavioral manifestation of alcohol dependence by activating endorphinergic input to the NAc from the ARC."

[Click here](#) to read the full study in the Sept. 4 issue of *Science Advances*.

NOVEMBER 2019