



RESEARCH ROUNDS

## A Life-Saving Benefit of Acupuncture

Editorial Staff | DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE

Depression is associated with cardiovascular disease via both lifestyle and physiological mechanisms. Depression makes one more likely to eat poorly, stop exercising, suffer sleep irregularities, etc.; and has been shown to elevate heart rate and blood pressure, reduce blood flow to the heart, and increase cortisol production.

New research suggests acupuncture use is associated with a lower risk of coronary heart disease (CHD; the most common form of cardiovascular disease) in depressed patients. The study by Chia-Yu Huang, et al. (for full text, [click here](#)), found that patients diagnosed with depression who received acupuncture experienced a significantly lower rate of CHD than depressed patients who did not receive acupuncture. These findings were independent of age, sex, comorbidities and medication use.

The study involved more than 43,000 patients, identified through the Taiwanese National Health Insurance Research Database, and divided into an acupuncture group and a non-acupuncture group for comparison based on a review of insurance claims records. TCM services are reimbursed through National Health Insurance, which covers more than 99 percent of the Taiwanese population, according to the study authors.



Both manual acupuncture and electroacupuncture use was identified via diagnostic codes in patient records (ICD-9-CM). Manual acupuncture was by far the most common treatment (88 percent of patients), with 3 percent receiving electroacupuncture and 9 percent receiving a combination of the two.

On average, patients received nearly nine acupuncture treatments apiece - with their first treatment more than three-and-a-half years after their depression diagnosis. Could earlier use of acupuncture save even more depressed patients from coronary heart disease?

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