

Becker-Witt C., Jena S., Brinkhaus B., Selim D., Liecker B., Willich S.
Effectiveness of acupuncture treatment for chronic neck pain: the acupuncture
in routine care (ARC) study. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*.
2004; 58(Suppl.1); A69.

Effectiveness of acupuncture treatment for chronic neck pain– the Acupuncture in Routine Care Study (ARC)

Introduction: Acupuncture is widely used by patients suffering from chronic neck pain. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of treatment with vs. without acupuncture in patients with chronic neck pain in routine care.

Methods: Patients (≥ 18 years) with chronic neck pain were randomised either to an acupuncture group (ACU) or a control group (CON). Patients who disagreed with randomisation were monitored in a third group which got acupuncture as well (NR-ACU). Over a period of 3 months the ACU (and NR-ACU) received up to 15 acupuncture treatments, whereas the CON received no acupuncture. For all treatment groups the usage of routine medical care was permitted. Patients received standardised questionnaires including socio-demographic data, neck pain and disability (Neck pain and Disability Scale; NPDS) and health related quality of life (SF-36) at baseline and 3 months

Results: Of a total of 13,846 patients included in the study 3,451 patients (69 % female, 49.2 ± 12.7 years, 31% male, 53.5 ± 12.9 years) agreed to be randomised. After 3 months of treatment we found a higher improvement in neck pain in the ACU compared to the CON (NPDS baseline to 3 months: ACU 56.4 ± 15.2 to 39.6 ± 17.5 ; CON 54.5 ± 15.8 to 51.2 ± 17.7 , $p < 0.001$). After 3 months quality of life on the mental and the physical component scale differed significantly between the treatment groups ($p < 0.001$), again in favour of ACU. There were no significant differences between ACU and NR-ACU for the NPDS and quality of life after 3 months. **Conclusion:** In patients with chronic neck pain acupuncture in addition to routine care showed a significant and relevant improvement of pain, disability and quality of life compared to treatment without acupuncture.