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PRESS RELEASE

When It Comes to Chronic Pain, Australians Deserve to Know All Their Options

Many Australians are surprised to learn that acupuncture may be an evidence informed treatment option for some chronic pain conditions. During National Pain Week (27 July to 2 August), AACMA is encouraging Australians to better understand the role acupuncture may play alongside conventional healthcare.

Finding the right treatment for chronic pain is not always straightforward. For an estimated 3.6 million Australians living with persistent pain, it can mean years of searching for answers, trying different therapies and navigating a condition that affects almost every aspect of daily life.

As Australia marks National Pain Week, the [Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association \(AACMA\)](http://www.aacma.org.au), Australia's national peak body representing qualified and registered acupuncturists, is encouraging Australians living with chronic pain to understand the full range of evidence informed treatment options available to them, including the role acupuncture may play alongside conventional healthcare.

AACMA Deputy Chair and registered Chinese medicine practitioner **Kim Gatenby** says one of the biggest misconceptions she encounters is that acupuncture is something to consider only after every other treatment option has failed.

"People are often surprised to learn that acupuncture is recognised in clinical practice guidelines for the management of some chronic pain conditions. We regularly see patients who tell us they simply didn't realise it was an option available to them."

Chronic pain is one of Australia's leading causes of disability and extends well beyond physical discomfort. It can affect a person's ability to work, sleep, exercise, maintain relationships and participate in everyday life. The condition is also estimated to cost Australia more than \$140 billion annually through healthcare costs, lost productivity and its broader impact on quality of life.



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Gatenby says this highlights the importance of ensuring Australians are aware of all evidence informed treatment options available to them.

"There is rarely a single solution to persistent pain because every person's experience is different. Effective pain management is often built around an individualised approach that brings together the right combination of healthcare professionals and treatment options for that person."

Registered Chinese medicine practitioners work alongside GPs, specialists, physiotherapists and other allied health professionals to support people living with a wide range of chronic pain conditions.

Acupuncture is recognised in a number of Australian and international clinical practice guidelines for some chronic pain conditions and, where appropriate, may form part of a broader multidisciplinary treatment plan.

"Acupuncture isn't about replacing conventional healthcare. It's about making sure Australians know all of the evidence informed options available to them so they can make informed decisions about their care."

With chronic pain affecting millions of Australians, AACMA is encouraging people living with persistent pain to learn more about the full range of evidence informed treatment options available to them and seek advice from an appropriately qualified health practitioner.

More information, including a directory of qualified and registered practitioners, is available at www.acupuncture.org.au

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