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**IS ACUPUNCTURE JUST NEW-AGE NONSENSE?**

**AUSTRALIA’S LEADING ACUPUNCTURE ASSOCIATION EXPLAINS**

**AUSTRALIA:**With so many new and emerging trends in complementary medicine, it can be hard to sort the real-life remedies from the fake news. But while acupuncture is growing in popularity every day in Western society, it is far from a new-age scam.

The Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association (AACMA) is the peak professional organisation for Chinese medicine, acupuncturists, herbalists, and traditional remedial massage practitioners in Australia; and aims to educate Australian’s on the science behind acupuncture and debunk any myths or misconceptions.

Modern research shows acupuncture to be an effective treatment, especially for pain.

“Patient feedback on acupuncture treatments for pain is extremely positive, especially as it reduces or even eliminates the need for pain-relieving drugs,” says Australian Acupuncture & Chinese Medicine Association President Waveny Holland.

Acupuncture has seen a surge in popularity over the last 12 months, a consequence of work related issues due to more people working from home and seeking natural, drug-free options for pain management.

“Australians are starting to embrace acupuncture as a go-to treatment for pain and general wellbeing," continues Waveny, “acupuncture has been used for many centuries across East Asia to treat a full range of health conditions, and the Western world is now realising the benefits acupuncture treatments can have if integrated into their health care program.”

Acupuncture can also be a useful treatment for mental health issues with patients endorsing the relaxing and mind calming effect that acupuncture provides.

“Acupuncture is effective to help manage mental health and emotional issues, something that has been invaluable to support patients with anxiety and fear during COVID lockdowns,” states Waveny.

**The science of acupuncture**

There is plenty of evidence to show that acupuncture does work for many different conditions. In 2017’s Acupuncture Evidence Project – an analysis of previous literature investigating acupuncture’s effectiveness, commissioned by the Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association (AACMA) – found the treatment useful for no fewer than 117 ailments. It was clear; the authors concluded: “It is no longer possible to say that the effectiveness of acupuncture is because of the placebo effect.”

This, and many other studies, support what practitioners have known all along: that acupuncture has the power to offer relief to those who are suffering. From treating musculoskeletal pain to hay fever, adverse reactions to radiotherapy and chemotherapy to depression, rheumatoid arthritis, and more, acupuncture can have real therapeutic benefits.

For pain, in particular, acupuncture is recognised worldwide as “a proven drug-free alternative,” says Waveny Holland. Helping ease pain has far-reaching consequences beyond the primary concern. “Pain, especially chronic pain can often be accompanied by depression, loss of job, diminished quality of life, lack of sleep, and isolation. It is most often treated with opioid drugs to relieve pain and antidepressants to manage the depression, and coping with the side effects and potential dependency adds to the burden of pain. It is extraordinarily satisfying for both patient and practitioner to see a marked reduction or elimination of the pain after just one acupuncture treatment. Nothing beats that feeling.”

Acupuncture is not only an effective curative treatment but, importantly, also a beneficial treatment for maintenance and prevention, adds Waveny. “Acupuncture can treat many conditions, and if you have regular treatments, you’re less likely to suffer from any of them in the first place,” she explains. “It’s just like servicing and maintaining your car to keep it running smoothly.”

There’s no doubt acupuncture can assist in pain relief, but it is essential to use a qualified acupuncturist with the requisite tertiary university training to ensure you are receiving safe and effective treatment. All AACMA member practitioners are registered with the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia and have completed the necessary four-year university degree and associated 1000 hours of clinical practice – search the free [AACMA database](https://members.acupuncture.org.au/practitionersearch) to find a Chinese medicine practitioner in your area.

For interviews with AACMA president Waveny Holland or to speak to a local accredited acupuncturist, contact Amanda Kuhn ([amanda@missymischief.com](mailto:amanda@missymischief.com))

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**Who is the Australian Acupuncture & Chinese Medicine Association Ltd (AACMA)?**

The AACMA was established in 1973 when traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) was relatively unknown by the western population of Australia. Today, the association represents the majority of qualified acupuncture and TCM practitioners in Australia. We encourage and enable our members to grow as TCM practitioners through professional development opportunities, research and collaboration.