

# A retrospective study of acupuncture in the emergency department in a public safety net hospital

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**Objectives:** Evaluate the acceptability and response to acupuncture in a safety net Emergency Department (ED).

**Methods:** A retrospective descriptive study of ED patients who were referred for treatment to the Division of Integrative Medicine (DIM), Highland Hospital, between February 23, 2017, and February 23, 2018. Acupuncture effectiveness was measured through patient-reported, visual analog pain scales (VAS). Demographics, insurance, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) diagnosis, and analgesics were also collected.

**Results:** 109 patients received 111 treatments. Male patients comprised 46 (41%), female patients 63 (59%). Ethnicities included: African American 43 (40%), Caucasian 14 (12%), Hispanic American 12 (11%), Asian American 8 (7%), Pacific Islander 2 (2%) and other 30 (28%). Insurance coverage from three public, not-for-profit insurance companies: Alameda Alliance 34 (15%), Medical 68 (30%) and Medicare 49 (22%). The chief complaint of pain was categorized into five types: extremity pain, head/neck pain, back pain, abdominal pain (with/without nausea/vomiting) and chest pain. Some cases reported multiple pain. Most common TCM pattern diagnosis was qi and blood stasis, in 102 cases (94%). 104 cases reported pain; 81 (78%) VAS pain scores were recorded. Pain reduction in 69 cases (85%) with 12 (15%) indicated no pain reduction. No adverse events reported. Average pre-acupuncture pain score was 8.0 (variance 4.90). Average post-acupuncture pain score was 4.4 (variance 10.74), with pain reduction of  $3.6 \pm 0.57$  (95% CI). Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests show statistically significant pain reduction after acupuncture treatment.

**Conclusion:** Our study, acupuncture was accepted by all ethnicities and covered by many types of insurance, in a safety net hospital ED. VAS pain score analysis indicated acupuncture was effective and well accepted by most patients for pain control. The significant reduction in VAS scores suggests that acupuncture might reduce the need for conventional analgesics as has been demonstrated in some prior studies.

Society of Integrative Oncology, 2012. [Click Here](#)

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