

Costs and consequences of acupuncture as a treatment for chronic pain: a systematic review of economic evaluations conducted alongside randomised controlled trials.

Ambrósio EM, Bloor K, MacPherson H.

Department of Health Sciences, University of York, Heslington, York, UK.

BACKGROUND: The economic burden that chronic pain conditions impose on individuals and society is significant. Acupuncture appears to be a clinically effective treatment for some chronic pain conditions. Given the need for policy decisions to be informed by economic evaluations, the objective of this systematic review was to synthesise data from economic evaluations to determine whether acupuncture for the treatment of chronic pain conditions is good value for money.

METHODS: A literature search was conducted using health and economics databases, with additional hand-searching. Economic evaluations conducted alongside randomised controlled trials were eligible.

RESULTS: Eight economic evaluations were included in this review, seven cost-utility analyses and one cost-effectiveness analysis. Conditions treated included low back pain, neck pain, dysmenorrhoea, migraine and headache, and osteoarthritis. From the seven cost-utility analyses, acupuncture was found to be clinically effective but cost more. The cost per quality adjusted life year (QALY) gained ranged from £2527 to £14,976 per QALY, below the commonly quoted threshold used by the UK National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence of £20,000 to £30,000. The one cost-effectiveness study indicated that there might be both clinical benefits and cost savings associated with acupuncture for migraine. There was heterogeneity across the eight trials in terms of professional who provided the acupuncture, style of acupuncture, and country of origin.

CONCLUSION: The cost per QALY gained in all seven cost-utility studies was found to be below typical thresholds of willingness to pay. Acupuncture appears to be a

cost-effective intervention for some chronic pain conditions.

Copyright © 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

PMID: 22863652 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

[Lees de samenvatting online](#)