

Acupuncture Effective for Treating Post-Operative Pain

New research from Duke University Medical Center points to the positive impact that acupuncture has on reducing surgical patients' postoperative pain, and their need for powerful opioids to treat the pain.

DUMC anesthesiologists combined the data from 15 small, randomized clinical trials in coming to their conclusion. Using acupuncture before and after surgery produced the best results for patients, who reported lower levels of postoperative pain and a significantly reduced need for painkillers. In addition, acupuncture mitigated the effects of opioids when they were needed.

"The most important outcome for the patient is the reduction of the side effects associated with opioids," said T.J. Gan, M.D., the Duke anesthesiologist who presented the study at the annual scientific conference of the American Society for Anesthesiology in San Francisco in October 2007. Gan pointed out that acupuncture is a relatively inexpensive therapy that has virtually no side effects when practiced by trained professionals.

"Acupuncture is slowly becoming more accepted by American physicians, but it is still underutilized," Gan noted. "Studies like this, which show that there is a benefit to using it, should help give physicians sitting on the fence the data they need to integrate acupuncture into their routine care of surgery patients."

Source: Duke University Medical Center report, October 2007