

# Is Acupuncture and Medical Advice an Effective Treatment of Low Back Pain: A Critically Appraised Topic

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## Clinical Bottom Line

**The current best evidence indicates that acupuncture is effective at reducing pain and improving function in patients with lower back pain when use alongside medical advice**

## Search Strategy

A systematic Search was performed on 3 databases (**Medline, Cochrane and CINAHL**) to answer our clinical question *Is acupuncture when combined with medical advice effective at reducing pain and improving function for the treatment of patients with low back pain?* with the below PICO search.

Following screening in line with our exclusion criteria we identified 2 articles (See figure 1) to be included in our CAT. The search was limited to the last 5 years and systematic reviews or meta-analysis.

**P:** {Low Back Pain OR Lumbar Back Pain OR Lumbalgia}

**AND**

**I:** {Acupuncture OR Acupuncture Therapy} **AND** {Strengthening OR Stretching OR Postural Control OR Posture OR pain management}

**AND**

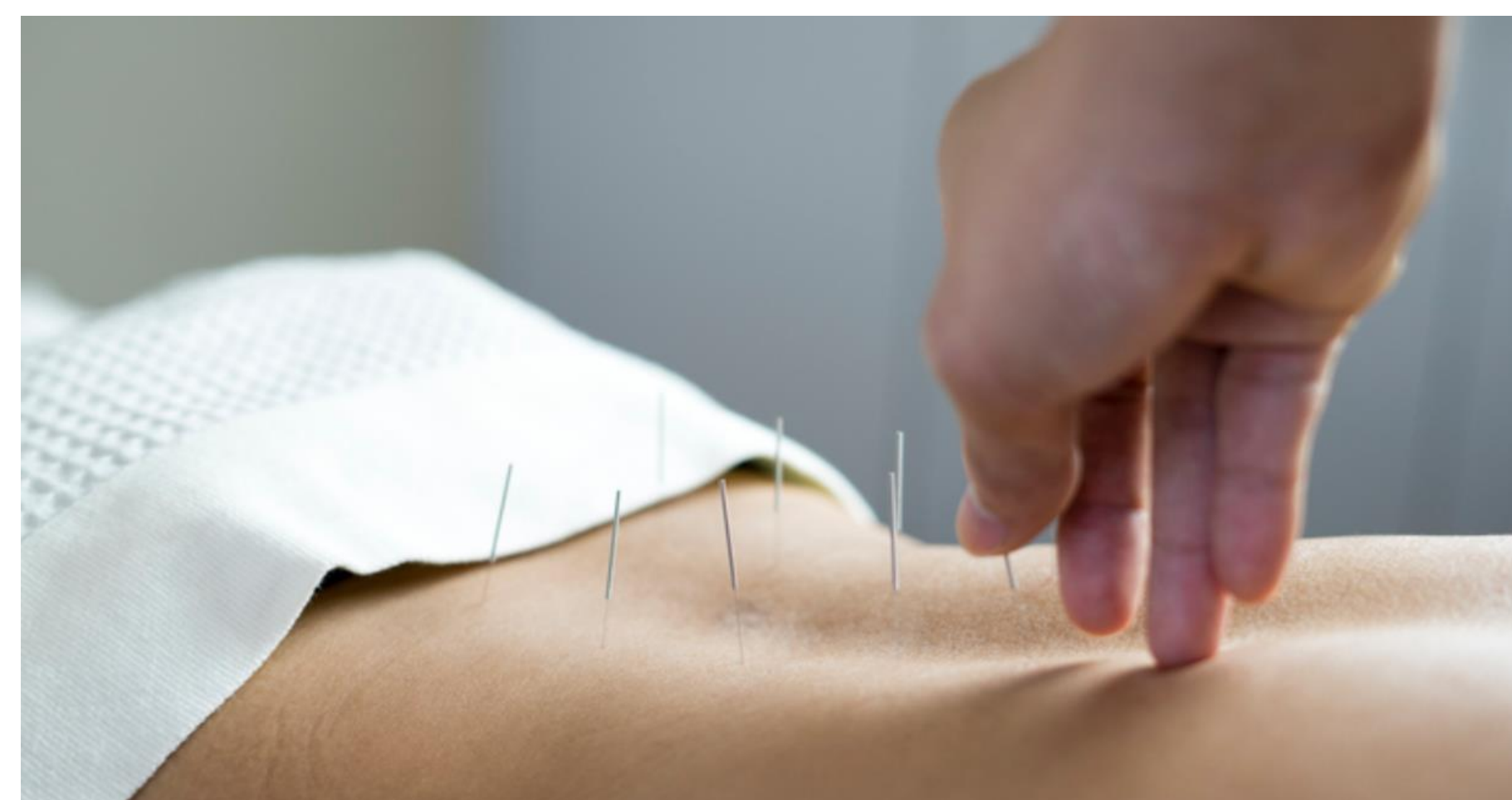
**O:** {Function OR Recovery of Function OR Range of Motion OR ROM or Quality of Life OR Pain OR Back Pain OR Chronic Pain.}

## Exclusion Criteria

- Other forms of therapy – such as low-level laser therapy and injection therapy
- Must be a systematic or Cochrane review or a meta-analysis of RCTs
- Therapy used on areas of the body other than lower back
- Studies where no full text link is available
- Papers not published in English
- Must be Published in 2016 or later

## Summary for Critical Appraisal

- Both studies had a clearly defined research question
- Both reviews only included RCTs
- Minimum of nine databases searched
- Minimum of 25 individual studies included in each review
- Both studies used 2 independent authors to assess risk of bias, using standardised criteria
- Participants were  $\geq 18$  years old
- Homogenous outcome measures meta-analysed
- The studies included were published in English, German and Chinese- increasing heterogeneity
- Tight confidence intervals – meaning precise results
- Outcome measures appropriate to the clinical question
- Author reports that they cannot rule publication bias out of the study



## Conclusions

- **Acupuncture VS Sham Treatment:** There is no evidence to suggest that acupuncture is effective at reducing pain immediately post treatment compared to a Placebo. The MD was 9.22 lower in the acupuncture group, CI 95%, (-13.82 to -4.61 )The difference did not meet predefined clinically meaningful change.
- Acupuncture should be used alongside usual care (medical advice) to relieve pain in patients with NSLBP (SMD -0.94, 95% CI -1.57 to -0.30)
- Medical advice should include stretching and strengthening exercise prescription, postural advice and education surrounding lower back pain

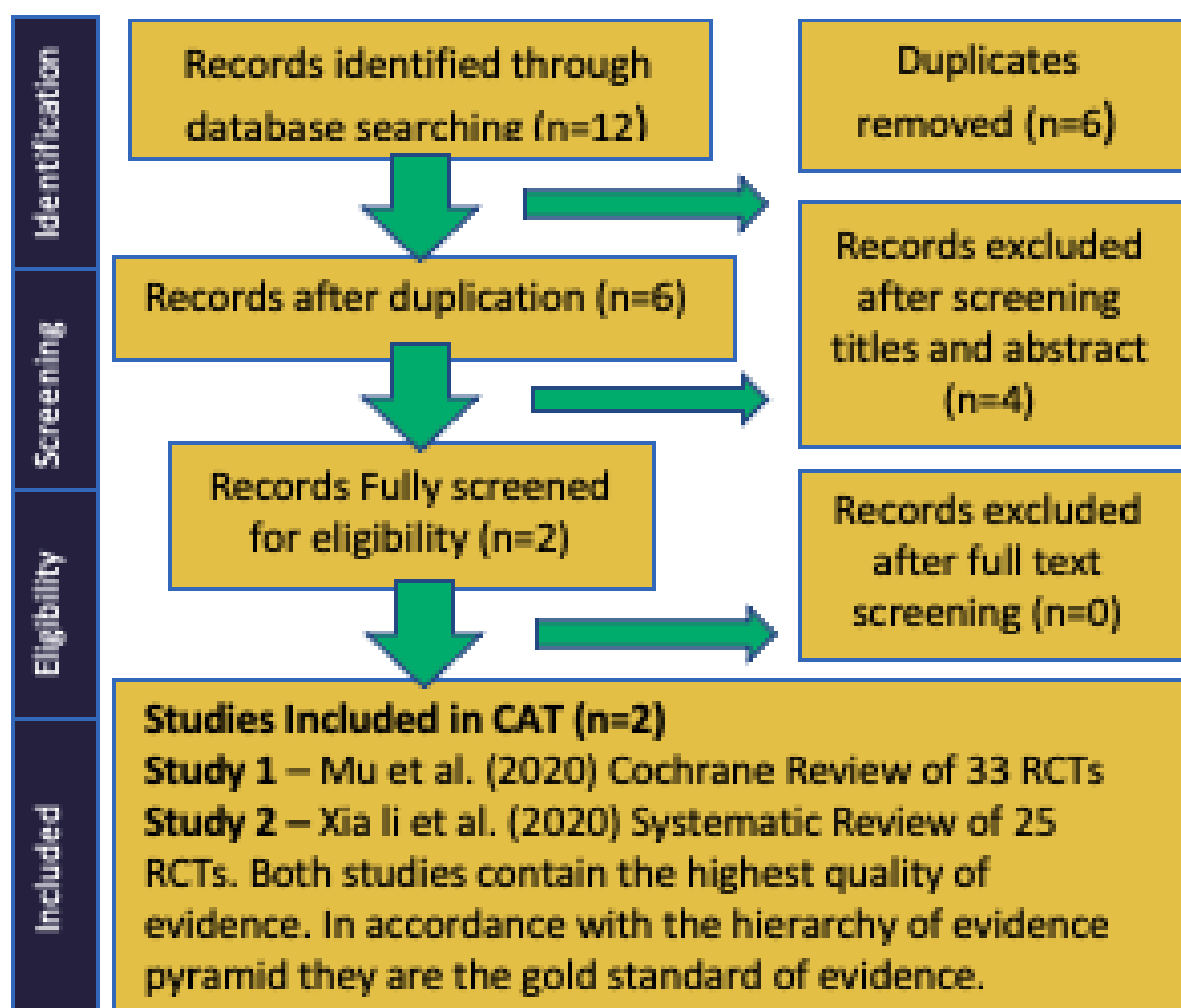


Figure 1. Flow Diagram of Study Inclusion



Scan for references