

**Is acupuncture an effective method of reducing pain in outpatient physiotherapy attendees with acute soft tissue injuries or fractures, compared to usual physiotherapy**

**Clinical Bottom Line**

There is no good quality evidence available through systematic reviews or RCT's to indicate the effectiveness of acupuncture as a method of providing pain relief for patients with acute soft tissue injuries or fractures compared to usual physiotherapy.

The only evidence available came from retrospective observational studies.

**Criteria for Critically Appraised Topic**

***Population:***

Physiotherapy outpatient attendees with soft tissue injuries or fractures

***Intervention:***

Acupuncture (dry needling)

Trigger point acupuncture

***Comparison:*** Sham acupuncture, routine physiotherapy care, other physiotherapy pain relieving modalities

***Outcomes:*** pain, disability, function

***Primary Outcomes:*** pain

***Secondary outcomes:*** disability, function

***Inclusions:*** Adults presenting with soft tissue injuries or fractures in any location

***Exclusions:*** Serious pathology, children, pregnancy, animal studies

## **Search Terms used**

### ***Databases Searched:***

Cochrane	Pedro	PsychINFO	Medline
Clinical Evidence	Bandolier	NELH	Professional Websites (CSP)
Clinical Guidelines	NICE	HTA	
Rehab Data	CINAHL	Embase	

### ***Types of study included:***

Randomised controlled trials  
Systematic reviews

### ***Key words searched:***

Dry Needling	Sham	Physiotherapy	Colles	Wrist
Acupuncture	Pain	Outpatients	Humerus	Hand
Chinese	Disability	Whiplash	Scaphoid	Hip
Traditional	Function	Tendonitis	Ankle	Muscle
Pain	Trigger point	Bursitis	Low back pain	Tear
Soft tissue	RCT	Knee	Acute	Strain
Fracture	Systematic reviews	Ligament injuries	Tennis elbow	Sprain
Foot				

### ***Time Frame:***

1998-2008

## Available Evidence

Database Searched (Specific to CAT)	Number of abstracts	Number of Relevant Abstracts
Cochrane	2	
Pedro	0	
Medline	0	
CINAHL	2	1
Embase	10	1
Clinical Evidence	0	
PyschINFO	0	
Ahmed	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>

## Results:

16 abstracts were initially reviewed. Three articles answered the clinical question. However, none of the articles were RCT's or systematic reviews. Two studies were retrospective observational studies and the third was an observational study only. All of the articles indicate that further research is required to establish the use of acupuncture for pain relief for acute soft tissue injuries or fractures as well looking at the cost effectiveness compared to other modalities of treatment.

## Implications for practice

The lack of available good quality evidence to answer the question means that no change in current practice is warranted at this time? it is not possible to draw any conclusions from the evidence available.

## **References**

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