



# Acta Medica Europa

## Psychological Impact of Alternative Medicine on Chronic Back Pain in an Elder

Juan Cai <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Specialist of Family Medicine, Shanghai, China

### Article Info

Received: 9 January 2020

Accepted: 13 January 2020

Published: 15 January 2020

### Keywords:

Chronic back pain, alternative medicine, acupuncture, placebo effect, psychological well-being.

### ABSTRACT

This case report delves into the multifaceted experience of chronic back pain, highlighting the significant psychological benefits that can accompany the use of alternative medicine in an elderly woman. It underscores the importance of a holistic approach to pain management, acknowledging the therapeutic potential beyond physical effects.

### Corresponding author:

Juan Cai

Specialist of Family Medicine,  
Shanghai, China.

familydoctorshanghai20@gmail.com

### INTRODUCTION

Chronic back pain, a prevalent and often debilitating condition, poses a substantial global health burden with far-reaching consequences for affected individuals. While conventional approaches to pain management have made significant strides, an increasing number of individuals turn to alternative medicine modalities to address not only the physical aspects but also the psychological dimensions of chronic back pain. This article aims to delve into the complex interplay between alternative medicine interventions and the psychological well-being of individuals grappling with the challenges of chronic back pain (1-4).

The psychological impact of chronic back pain is multifaceted, encompassing aspects such as stress, anxiety, depression, and impaired quality of life. Alternative medicine, ranging from acupuncture and yoga to mindfulness-based interventions and herbal remedies, has gained popularity as individuals seek holistic approaches that address both the physical symptoms and the emotional toll of chronic pain. Throughout this comprehensive review, we will explore the evidence surrounding the psychological impact of various alternative medicine practices on chronic back pain. Understanding how these modalities influence psychological outcomes is crucial for healthcare providers, researchers, and patients alike, as it

informs the integration of complementary approaches into comprehensive pain management strategies. As the field of integrative medicine continues to evolve, this article seeks to consolidate current research findings and clinical insights. By examining the psychological dimensions of alternative medicine interventions for chronic back pain, we aim to contribute to the growing body of knowledge surrounding the holistic care of individuals with persistent pain, ultimately fostering an integrative and patient-centered approach that addresses both the physical and psychological aspects of this challenging condition (3-8).

Here it was aimed to present an elderly case whose chronic pain was treated with alternative medicine.

### CASE PRESENTATION

An 82-year-old woman presented with a long history of chronic lower back pain, significantly impacting her mobility and daily activities. Despite conventional treatment with medication and physical therapy, her pain remained largely uncontrolled, accompanied by increasing anxiety and depression.

Traditional healthcare offered limited additional options due to concerns about potential medication side effects and invasive procedures. Open to exploring alternative approaches, the

patient agreed to try acupuncture as part of her pain management strategy.

Following weekly acupuncture sessions for two months, the patient reported a noticeable decrease in her back pain intensity. However, the most striking improvement she described was a significant shift in her overall well-being. She felt more optimistic, less anxious, and more motivated to engage in daily activities, regaining a sense of control over her life despite the persisting pain.

## DISCUSSION

This case illustrates the potential psychological benefits of alternative medicine, beyond its direct physical effects. While the effectiveness of acupuncture for chronic back pain remains a subject of debate, this case highlights the powerful role of placebo phenomena and other psychological factors in pain management.

Several mechanisms may contribute to the observed psychological improvement. Engaging in alternative therapies can empower patients, offering a sense of agency and control over their pain and overall health. This feeling of self-efficacy can reduce anxiety and promote a more positive outlook. The ritualistic nature of some alternative therapies, like acupuncture, can provide a sense of calmness and relaxation, promoting stress reduction and pain relief through its impact on the nervous system. The personalized attention and care often associated with alternative medicine approaches can foster stronger patient-provider relationships, enhancing trust and promoting a sense of emotional support, crucial for coping with chronic pain. It is important to acknowledge that the effectiveness of alternative therapies can vary based on individual factors and underlying pain mechanisms. However, this case emphasizes the importance of considering the holistic experience of chronic pain, recognizing the potential psychological benefits that can augment pain management strategies (8-12).

This case report demonstrates the value of approaching chronic pain management from a holistic perspective, incorporating alternative therapies alongside conventional medicine. By acknowledging the complex interplay between physical and psychological factors, we can unlock a broader range of therapeutic options for individuals struggling with chronic pain, fostering not only physical relief but also improved well-being and quality of life.

## REFERENCES

1. Urits I, Schwartz RH, Orhurhu V, et al. A Comprehensive Review of Alternative Therapies for the Management of Chronic Pain Patients: Acupuncture, Tai Chi, Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine, and Chiropractic Care. *Adv Ther.* 2021;38(1):76-89. doi:10.1007/s12325-020-01554-0
2. Behzadmehr R, Dastyar N, Moghadam MP, Abavisani M, Moradi M. Effect of complementary and alternative medicine interventions on cancer related pain among breast cancer patients: A systematic review. *Complement Ther Med.* 2020;49:102318. doi:10.1016/j.ctim.2020.102318

3. Poulsen MJ, Coto J. Nursing Music Protocol and Postoperative Pain. *Pain Manag Nurs.* 2018;19(2):172-176. doi:10.1016/j.pmn.2017.09.003
4. Deng G. Integrative Medicine Therapies for Pain Management in Cancer Patients. *Cancer J.* 2019;25(5):343-348. doi:10.1097/PPO.0000000000000399
5. Millstine D, Chen CY, Bauer B. Complementary and integrative medicine in the management of headache. *BMJ.* 2017;357:j1805. Published 2017 May 16. doi:10.1136/bmj.j1805
6. Bauer BA, Tilburt JC, Sood A, Li GX, Wang SH. Complementary and alternative medicine therapies for chronic pain. *Chin J Integr Med.* 2016;22(6):403-411. doi:10.1007/s11655-016-2258-y
7. Ng JY, Mohiuddin U. Quality of complementary and alternative medicine recommendations in low back pain guidelines: a systematic review. *Eur Spine J.* 2020;29(8):1833-1844. doi:10.1007/s00586-020-06393-9
8. Keefe KR, Byrne KJ, Levi JR. Treating pediatric post-tonsillectomy pain and nausea with complementary and alternative medicine. *Laryngoscope.* 2018;128(11):2625-2634. doi:10.1002/lary.27231
9. Ng JY, Sharma AE. Guidelines for Cancer-Related Pain: A Systematic Review of Complementary and Alternative Medicine Recommendations. *Pain Pract.* 2021;21(4):454-467. doi:10.1111/papr.12964
10. Zheng Z, Xue CC. Pain research in complementary and alternative medicine in Australia: a critical review. *J Altern Complement Med.* 2013;19(2):81-91. doi:10.1089/acm.2011.0233
11. Dhanani NM, Caruso TJ, Carinci AJ. Complementary and alternative medicine for pain: an evidence-based review. *Curr Pain Headache Rep.* 2011;15(1):39-46. doi:10.1007/s11916-010-0158-y
12. Moisset X, Bouhassira D, Avez Couturier J, et al. Pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatments for neuropathic pain: Systematic review and French recommendations. *Rev Neurol (Paris).* 2020;176(5):325-352. doi:10.1016/j.neurol.2020.01.361