

Acupuncture may yield pain relief for children who have complex medical conditions

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It appears that acupuncture may be a viable option for pain management when it comes to pediatric patients who have complex medical conditions, according to new research published by Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare in St. Paul, Minnesota. The study found that a significant portion of children who have chronic care conditions - many of whom are already on numerous medications - might benefit from the use of the low-risk and non-toxic benefits of acupuncture. The study was published in a recent edition of *Medical Acupuncture*.

Many [patients](#) who have complex medical conditions such as cerebral palsy, [spinal cord injuries](#) and other brain and musculoskeletal conditions experience [chronic pain](#). As a result, they are often medicated with drugs that can make them sleepy, gain weight and exacerbate mood swings that burden both the child and their families, says Scott Schwantes, M.D., a pediatrician at Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare and lead author of the study.

"A lot of these patients have gone through a tremendous amount of physical and emotional pain," Schwantes says. "These kids have a complex array of distressing symptoms that decrease their quality of life. For some of them, [acupuncture](#) may be a valuable tool to add to their treatment."

The study presents a case review of nine patients who received

acupuncture treatments in the clinic or hospital between June 2014 and June 2015. Patients received treatments based on their backgrounds and [conditions](#). Treatments included energetic work, biomechanical treatment (surface release technique, percutaneous electrical nerve stimulation), and/or ear stimulation. All of the patients received notable benefits from acupuncture - spanning from decreased pain to complete relief.

Acupuncture typically takes about 30 minutes and involves the process of strategically placing a series of needles at precise points on a patient. The minimally invasive outpatient procedure could be an alternative for children who are already burdened with surgeries, frequent hospital stays and medications, Schwantes says. The largest drawback to the procedure is needle phobia in some children.

"The proof is with the patients. They're the ones who are successfully recovering from pain," Schwantes says. "This study shows that acupuncture can be a safe, well-tolerated, and effective therapy for children and young adults with pediatric-onset disabilities."

Provided by Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare

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