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**Costs and consequences of acupuncture as a treatment for chronic pain: a**

**systematic review of economic evaluations conducted alongside randomised**

**controlled trials.**

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**BACKGROUND**: The economic burden that chronic pain conditions impose on

individuals and society is significant. Acupuncture appears to be a clinically

effective treatment for some chronic pain conditions. Given the need for policy

decisions to be informed by economic evaluations, the objective of this

systematic review was to synthesise data from economic evaluations to determine

whether acupuncture for the treatment of chronic pain conditions is good value

for money.

**METHODS:** A literature search was conducted using health and economics databases,

with additional hand-searching. Economic evaluations conducted alongside

randomised controlled trials were eligible.

RESULTS: Eight economic evaluations were included in this review, seven

cost-utility analyses and one cost-effectiveness analysis. Conditions treated

included low back pain, neck pain, dysmenorrhoea, migraine and headache, and

osteoarthritis. From the seven cost-utility analyses, acupuncture was found to be

clinically effective but cost more. The cost per quality adjusted life year

(QALY) gained ranged from £2527 to £14,976 per QALY, below the commonly quoted

threshold used by the UK National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence of

£20,000 to £30,000. The one cost-effectiveness study indicated that there might

be both clinical benefits and cost savings associated with acupuncture for

migraine. There was heterogeneity across the eight trials in terms of

professional who provided the acupuncture, style of acupuncture, and country of

origin.

**CONCLUSION**: The cost per QALY gained in all seven cost-utility studies was found

to be below typical thresholds of willingness to pay. Acupuncture appears to be a

cost-effective intervention for some chronic pain conditions.

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