

It is time for acupuncture services to take their proper place in the broader system of health care delivery.

# Fact Sheet

The CDC reports that “Deaths from prescription painkillers have reached epidemic levels in the past decade” and recommends Health Insurers “Increase coverage for other treatments to reduce pain”. [www.cdc.gov/VitalSigns/PainkillerOverdoses/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/VitalSigns/PainkillerOverdoses/index.html)

Acupuncture is cost-effective, clinically effective and widely used in a variety of health care settings.

## Cost-effectiveness of Acupuncture:

### Diagnosis

### Savings per Patient with acupuncture treatment

#### Post Stroke Rehabilitation

\$26,000

Johansson, K. et al (1994) Neurology 43:2189-2192

#### Angina Pectoris

\$32,000/5yrs

Reduction of hospitalization by 90% and a 70% reduction in surgery.  
–Altern, J. Complement Med 5:405-413

#### Severe Osteoarthritis

\$9,000

Compared to arthroplasty surgery, “Acupuncture in the Treatment of Severe Osteoarthritis: a long term study”.

#### Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)

\$4246

Laser acupuncture treatments vs. medically treated without surgery.

## I. Cost-effectiveness of Acupuncture:

- Acupuncture has been rated at the highest level of effectiveness in the treatment of low back pain in two large studies (Cochrane and the British Government), and as a result of these studies the British and German health care systems now pay for acupuncture treatment.
- According to a study in Washington State, costs actually decreased for acupuncture and complementary medicine users in high disease burden groups due to a reduction of more expensive conventional care.
- In these studies, inclusion of acupuncture did not significantly escalate health care costs, perhaps decreasing costs if preventive care, whose results are hard to factor in, were included.

## II. Clinical Efficacy:

- Acupuncture is a clinically effective treatment supported by numerous studies.
- NIH reports that the data in support of acupuncture are as strong as those for many accepted Western medical therapies.
- In 1997 the NIH approved acupuncture as an adjunctive treatment for several conditions including pain, nausea, asthma, carpal tunnel syndrome and paralysis from stroke.
- Over 500 positive clinical trials measuring the efficacy of acupuncture have been conducted in the past three decades.
- There are 50 systematic reviews of acupuncture in the Cochrane databases. Overall, the trend has been favorable, advocating the use of acupuncture in a clinical setting as an adjunct treatment with conventional therapies, where suitable (Witt et al. 2006).

- Positive studies include acupuncture treatment for low back pain, neck pain, osteoarthritis of the knee and hip, fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis, TMJ, headaches, infertility, pain and nausea in cancer patients.

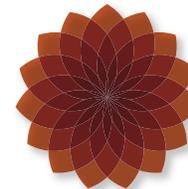
## III. Acupuncture Training:

- Acupuncturists in Maine are licensed by the Board of Complementary Medicine. Acupuncturists train for a minimum of 2050 hours in acupuncture in addition to required science and western biomedical courses. This is the equivalent of 3 to 4 years of study to achieve an entry level degree of Master of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

## IV. Acupuncture treatments are safe and result in very few side effects:

- One of the advantages of acupuncture is that the incidence of adverse effects is substantially lower than that of many drugs or other accepted medical procedures used for the same conditions.
- Acupuncture is a safe and cost-effective form of medicine that has been practiced and refined for more than 2500 years. Acupuncture uses ultra-thin needles to balance and increase energy and stimulate the nervous system to release brain chemicals for relaxation and well being.
- Studies in Europe and Japan showed that less than 0.2% of all individuals treated with acupuncture experienced adverse effects.

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