

# UHI Research Reviews

Practical Information to Help You Heal Right

## The Value of Acupuncture in Cancer Care

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### Introduction

In the United States, acupuncture is used to treat a variety of symptoms and conditions associated with cancer and the side effects of cancer treatments. A number of cancer centers in the U.S., including Dana-Farber Cancer Institute (DFCI) in Boston, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, and M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston are integrating acupuncture into cancer care. This trend parallels a broader trend of increasing use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) among cancer patients, estimated in some surveys to range between 48% and 83%. Specific use of acupuncture by cancer patients is estimated to range between 1.7% and 31%.

Randomized clinical trials (RCT) have demonstrated that acupuncture is effective for chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting. Research studies also suggest acupuncture may be helpful in managing cancer-related pain, chemotherapy-related neutropenia, cancer fatigue, and radiation-induced xerostomia. Acupuncture is gaining momentum and acceptance as a valid intervention in medical practice.

### Summary

Clinical research on acupuncture in cancer care is a new and challenging field in oncology. The results of clinical research will continue to provide us with clinically relevant answers for patients and oncologists. The evidence currently available has suggested that acupuncture is a safe and effective therapy to manage cancer and treatment related symptoms, while giving patients the ability to actively participate in their own care plan.

The successful integration of acupuncture at major academic medical and research facilities, such as DFCI and other major cancer centers, underscores the need for and value of acupuncture in cancer care.

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