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Evaluating the ROI and Cost Effectiveness of Acupuncture

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine is one of the fastest growing forms of health care in the United States. This explosion is due to the recognition by both patients and regulators of the safety, effectiveness and low costs associated with this form of patient care.



In recent years, numerous research studies have been conducted to document and measure the health benefits, savings and cost effectiveness of utilizing acupuncture in patient treatment plans.

Acupuncture Treatments Led to a Decrease in Days Missed at Work

One hundred twenty patients with migraines were randomly assigned to an acupuncture group (AG) or conventional drug therapy group. The AG patients received acupuncture twice a week for a maximum of thirty treatments. Severity and frequency of headache and days of missed work were evaluated 12 months after admission. The AG group had an absence rate of 1120 working days per year while the drug therapy group had a total absence rate of 1404 working days per year.

The Results: Cost savings of \$35,480 per year to the company, for the sixty patients receiving acupuncture versus those in drug therapy. *Liguori A et al (2000) Comparison of pharmacological treatment versus acupuncture for migraine without aura, J Trad Chin Med 20:231-240.*

\$57,000 in Hospital-Related Fees Saved as a Result of Acupuncture

29 patients with severe osteoarthritis of knee, each awaiting arthroplasty surgery, were randomly selected to receive a course of acupuncture treatment, or be placed on a waiting list to receive similar acupuncture treatment starting 9 weeks later. Of the 29 patients treated with acupuncture, 7 were able to cancel their scheduled surgeries.

The Results: Cost savings of \$9,000 per patient in hospital related fees. *Christenson BV et al (1992) "Acupuncture treatment of severe knee osteoarthritis: a long-term study", Acta Anesthesiol Scand 36:519-525.*

Nearly \$1 Million Saved from Decreased Days in Hospital or Nursing Home

Half of 78 stroke patients receiving standard rehabilitative care were randomly selected to receive adjunctive acupuncture treatment. Patients given the acupuncture protocol recovered faster and to a greater extent, spending an average of 88 days per patient in the hospital/nursing homes, compared to an average of 161 days without acupuncture.

The Results: Cost savings of \$26,000 per patient, or total of \$936,000 in avoided hospital fees. *Johansson K et al (1993), "Can sensory stimulation improve the functional outcome in stroke patients?" Neurology 43:2189-2192.*

Acupuncture for Angina Pectoris Saves Money and Reduces Hospitalization Time

One hundred five patients with angina pectoris received acupuncture and self-care education in addition to their pharmaceutical treatment. Seventy-three participants had been recommended for invasive procedures. The treatment protocol consisted of 12 visits over a four-week period that included an acupuncture treatment and an education session. A 90% reduction in hospitalization and a 70% reduction in surgery resulted.

The Results: Cost savings of \$32,000 per patient. *Ballegaard S et al (1999) Addition of acupuncture and self-care education in the treatment of patients with severe angina pectoris may be cost beneficial: An open, prospective study, J Altern Complement Med 5: 405-413.*