

# Spinal

## Lumbar Spine

### Summary:

Based on the evidence, AACP recommends that general practitioners should consider acupuncture as a treatment option for patients with low back pain (LBP), especially when it is used as part of a physiotherapy treatment regime. There is high-quality evidence supporting the use of acupuncture for acute LBP and chronic non-specific LBP, which is also supported by Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) guidelines (SIGN 2013). There is also evidence to support the cost-effectiveness of acupuncture in the treatment of LBP. The evidence concludes that acupuncture for LBP will reduce pain, and in turn, this will allow an earlier return to normal activities and enable engagement in physiotherapeutic exercise more rapidly. Alongside this, it may also mean that less analgesic medication is needed to manage the LBP. Acupuncture for the treatment of LBP is also supported by NICE (NICE 2009). Acupuncture treatment is especially cost-effective when it is delivered by a physiotherapist as part of a physiotherapy management plan. Physiotherapy is considered to be a cost-effective treatment for LBP, and is currently available across the UK. Therefore, acupuncture as part of physiotherapy treatment will improve patient outcomes while remaining cost-effective.

Lumbar Spine				
Systematic Reviews				
Reference	Condition	Number of studies included	Results	Conclusion
Lee J. H. <i>et al.</i> 2013	Acute LBP	11 RCTs	+	The current evidence is encouraging in that acupuncture may be more effective than medication for symptom improvement in acute LBP, and it may also relieve pain more effectively than sham acupuncture.
Xu M. <i>et al.</i> 2013	Chronic LBP	13 RCTs	+	Compared with no treatment, acupuncture achieved better outcomes in terms of pain relief, disability recovery and better QoL. Acupuncture is an effective treatment for chronic LBP.
Kim K. H. <i>et al.</i> 2013	Lumbar spinal stenosis	6 RCTs	+	Acupuncture may be recommended if patients have a preference for or willingness to receive acupuncture. Pain intensity, overall symptoms and functional outcomes related to spinal stenosis and QoL all showed significant improvements in the treatment group compared with the controls, which lasted for up to 6 months post-treatment.

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Kim <i>et al.</i> 2012	Cost effectiveness	9 cost-utility and 8 cost-benefit analysis	+	This systematic review of currently available economic analyses alongside RCTs showed the potential cost-effectiveness of acupuncture for the management of pain conditions such as LBP, headache and OA.
Yuan <i>et al.</i> 2008	LBP	23 RCTs	+?	There is moderate evidence that acupuncture is more effective than no treatment for short-term pain relief, and strong evidence of no significant difference between acupuncture and sham acupuncture.
Furlan <i>et al.</i> 2005	LBP	35 RCTs	+?	For chronic LBP, acupuncture needling is more effective for pain relief and functional improvement than no treatment or sham acupuncture immediately after treatment, but only in the short term. Acupuncture is not more effective than other conventional and "alternative" treatments.
Manheimer <i>et al.</i> 2005	LBP	33 RCTs	+	Acupuncture needling is more effective in relieving chronic pain than sham acupuncture or no additional treatment, but not other active therapies.
Yuan <i>et al.</i> 2004	LBP	10 RCTs	+	Acupuncture is a useful supplement to other treatments.

### Other Evidence

Reference	Condition	Research type	Results	Conclusion
SIGN 2013	Chronic LBP	Guideline	+	Acupuncture should be considered for short-term relief of pain in patients with chronic LBP.
Cho <i>et al.</i> 2013	Chronic LBP	RCT	+	This randomised sham-controlled trial suggests that acupuncture treatment has a better effect on the reduction of the troublesomeness of pain and its intensity than a sham control in participants with chronic LBP.
Yun <i>et al.</i> 2012	Chronic LBP	RCT	+	Both acupuncture modes have beneficial and persistent effectiveness against chronic LBP compared with the usual care group. Hegu acupuncture is significantly more effective than standardised acupuncture, especially in the long term.
Vas <i>et al.</i> 2012	Acute LBP	RCT	+?	All three modalities of acupuncture were better than conventional treatment alone, but there was no difference between the three acupuncture modalities, which implies that true acupuncture is not better than sham or placebo acupuncture.
Sherman <i>et al.</i> 2009	Chronic LBP	Critical review of evidence	+	The evidence suggests that acupuncture is a reasonable therapeutic option. Acupuncture may be especially valuable for patients who prefer it to other options, or are concerned about using analgesic medications. The authors of both studies of chronic LBP that were included concluded that acupuncture is a cost-effective intervention for back pain.
Ratcliffe <i>et al.</i> 2006	Chronic LBP, cost-effectiveness	RCT	+	A short course of traditional acupuncture for persistent non-specific LBP confers a modest health benefit for a minor extra cost to the NHS. Acupuncture care for LBP seems to be cost-effective in the longer term.