

Preserving Our Heritage



Ensuring Our Future

August 24, 2021

Attn: Health Technology Assessment (HTA) program

Re: Acupuncture for chronic migraine and chronic tension-type headache re-review comments

Submit all comments to: [shtap@hca.wa.gov](mailto:shtap@hca.wa.gov)

To Whom It May Concern:

The Washington Acupuncture and Eastern Medicine Association (WAEMA) would like to thank you for your review of acupuncture for chronic migraine and tension type headaches. After discussion with our community, it became clear that not only do many acupuncture practitioners have personal experience with offering successful treatments to their patients for migraines and headaches in general but there is also substantial evidence and institutional acceptance of this treatment to further support of our experiences.

We have already submitted many strong research studies that support the use of acupuncture for migraines for review, and we also want with this letter to punctuate the current level of support within the healthcare system for this treatment. The Veterans Administration (VA) has conducted their own literature reviews and research demonstrating that acupuncture for migraines and headaches have evidence of positive effects, substantial body of evidence resulting in high confidence in the treatment. <sup>(1)</sup> The National Center for Complimentary and Integrative Health also supports acupuncture for chronic headaches:

*“Results from a number of studies suggest that acupuncture may help ease types of pain that are often chronic such as low-back pain, neck pain, and osteoarthritis/knee pain. It also may help reduce the frequency of tension headaches and prevent migraine headaches. Therefore, acupuncture appears to be a reasonable option for people with chronic pain to consider.”<sup>(2)</sup>*

The American Migraine foundation also recommends acupuncture treatment for Migraines:

*“Based on a [recent systematic review of 22 clinical trials](#) involving 4985 people, there is evidence that acupuncture reduces the frequency of headache in individuals with migraine, and that the effect may be similar to that observed with preventive medications. The frequency of headache is dropped by 50% or more in up to 59% of individuals receiving acupuncture and this effect can persist for more than 6 months.”<sup>(3)</sup>*

And most recently we have this research that just came out this year, the ACUMIGRAN study; this study compared acupuncture treatments with pharmacological treatments for migraine, comparing headache frequency at the end of treatment;

*“Data suggested that acupuncture could be adopted as migraine prophylaxis and seem to be slightly superior to pharmacological treatment in compliance and rate of adverse events.”* <sup>(4)</sup>

Evidence continues to grow in support of acupuncture for migraines and tension-type headaches. Not only is the treatment effective but it is cost effective and safe, short term and long term. All medical professionals take an oath before they are allowed to practice stating their commitment to do no harm. Acupuncture as a form of medicine offers a safe and reliable approach. From an overview of systematic reviews on migraines it was “concluded that acupuncture treatments had fewer adverse events than medication, which indicated that acupuncture was a safe therapy for migraine.” <sup>(5)</sup>

The Health Care Authority (HCA) has supported botulism toxin (Botox) treatments for headaches. While these studies show few adverse events directly after the treatment, some long-term consequences come later when the toxin begins to spread throughout the body.

*“Onabotulinumtoxin A injection is given as a number of tiny injections intended to affect only the specific area where injected. However, it is possible that the medication may spread from the area of injection and affect muscles in other areas of the body. If the muscles that control breathing and swallowing are affected, you may develop severe problems breathing or swallowing that may last for several months and may cause death. If you have difficulty swallowing, you may need to be fed through a feeding tube to avoid getting food or drink into your lungs.”* <sup>(6)</sup>

The treatment uses a neurotoxin which can lead to nerve damage <sup>(7)</sup> and weakness of the neck muscles among other complications. Acupuncturists have reported cases of patients coming in with this issue and seeking acupuncture to not only help with the migraines, but to also help recover from the Botox treatments’ long-term effects. Not only does acupuncture help directly with the relief of migraines but it can also further complement Botox treatments by minimizing the side effects – it is a primary treatment as well as a complementary treatment.

Acupuncture as a treatment for migraines and tension type headaches has a growing body of evidence demonstrating efficacy as well as safety short term and long term. The entire medical community and healthcare system are always in search of the best solutions and treatment venues for whole patient care with lasting effects. Research and experience alike have shown that not only is acupuncture safe and effective for treatment of chronic migraines and tension type headaches, but it also cost effective. <sup>(8)</sup>

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Dr. JianFeng Yang

WAEMA Board President

On behalf of The Washington Acupuncture and Eastern Medicine Board of Directors

Notes:

1.

[https://www.hsrp.research.va.gov/publications/management\\_briefs/default.cfm?ManagementBriefsMenu=eBrief-no78](https://www.hsrp.research.va.gov/publications/management_briefs/default.cfm?ManagementBriefsMenu=eBrief-no78)

2. <https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/acupuncture-in-depth?nav=govd>

3. <https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/understanding-migraineacupuncture-and-migraine-finding-a-combination-that-sticks/>

4. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fneur.2020.570335/full>

5. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7125485/>

6. <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a608013.html>

7. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/04/150416094051.htm>

8. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0965229912000805>