

Meeting Summary

The Status and Future of Acupuncture Research: 10 Years Post-NIH Consensus Conference.

This special meeting organized by the Society of Acupuncture Research was held at the University of Maryland at Baltimore, Maryland on November 8-11, 2007. One goal was to commemorate the landmark Consensus Conference held at NIH in 1997 that assessed evidence for efficacy of acupuncture for various disorders. Another important goal of the present conference was to review the current state of acupuncture research and chart future directions in this field. The agenda for the meeting is posted on the Society of Acupuncture website (<http://www.acupunctureresearch.org/>). Speaker and poster abstracts are published in the October 2007 issue of the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine.

During the course of the four day meeting progress in basic and clinical research on acupuncture therapies was reported in plenary sessions, short talks, and poster sessions. Research on the use of acupuncture for rare diseases was represented in all venues at the meeting. For example, two plenary talks were presented that assessed the effect of acupuncture on treatment of fibromyalgia as well as additional posters presentations that described ongoing research to evaluate the efficacy of acupuncture for this disorder. A special symposium covered acupuncture treatment of gastrointestinal disorders including rare disorders such as celiac disease, Crohn's disease, and irritable bowel syndrome. Reports in poster sessions and short presentations also included investigations of acupuncture therapy for rare diseases such as carpal tunnel syndrome, Bell's Palsy, and temporomandibular joint dysfunction.

In addition to progress reported on acupuncture therapy for a series of diseases and disorders, the meeting also produced some important general outcomes and conclusions that will help define future research. Prominent among these was the recognition of the need to define more consistent protocols for clinical trials in acupuncture research so that clinical trials investigating acupuncture therapy for the same or similar disorders can be compared and provide strong confirmatory evidence for efficacy or lack of efficacy. There was considerable enthusiasm for considering the recently published *Standards for Reporting Intervention for Controlled Trials of Acupuncture (STRICTA)* (<http://www.stricta.info>) as a guide in this area. Secondly, the need to develop better and consistent acupuncture sham controls in the future was also recognized. Future development in both these areas should improve the quality of acupuncture research for all disorders, including rare disorders.