Acupuncture for Treatment of Alcohol Dependence - Establishment of Collaboration with St George’s Mental Health NHS Trust and Community Drug Service South London

Ming Cheng, Kaicun Zhao, Lily Holman and Carmel Clancy

Alcohol dependence is an increasing social problem. In the UK, the NHS estimates that around 9% of men and 4% of women show signs of alcohol dependence.

Acupuncture, as a treatment for addiction, can be integrated into a comprehensive programme to combat alcohol dependence. There have been research studies into the effectiveness of acupuncture to treat alcohol dependence and its related mental health disorders. However, although some findings are positive, they are still not sufficient or conclusive. Two questions need to be answered. The first is whether or not acupuncture is effective in treating alcohol addiction and its associated physiological and psychological symptoms, and the second is whether acupuncture is effective in preventing recidivism.

We have established cooperation between our School, South West London and St George’s Mental Health NHS Trust and Community Drug Service South London (CDS). Since January 2015, some alcohol dependent clients have been given acupuncture, and their clinical records show that acupuncture may be effective in helping prevent recidivism.

The hypothesis of this research is that acupuncture is effective in treating alcohol dependence by helping addicts quit alcohol drinking and maintain abstinence, and acupuncture has positive effects on symptoms of withdrawal and quality of life.

This paper will present the aims and stages of this practical research and will demonstrate how we will measure the effect of treatment on the management of the clients’ addiction to alcohol.