



Effective Health Care

Non-traditional Treatment to Control Pain in Terminally Ill Cancer Patients in Palliative Care

Nomination Summary Document

Results of Topic Selection Process & Next Steps

- Acupuncture for pain control in terminally ill cancer patients in palliative care was found to be addressed by a 2008 review titled *Acupuncture is Underutilized in Hospice and Palliative Medicine*. Given that the existing report covers this nomination, no further activity will be undertaken on this topic.
 - Standish, LJ, Kozak L, and Congdon S. Acupuncture is underutilized in hospice and palliative medicine. *American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Medicine*, Aug-Sept 2008, Vol 25 No. 4, pp 298-308.
- The topics of herbal medicine and faith healing for pain control in terminally ill cancer patients in palliative care are not feasible for a full systematic review due to the limited data available for a review at this time.

Topic Description

Nominator: Individual

Nomination Summary: The nominator is interested in the most appropriate treatment to control pain and hydration for terminally ill cancer patients in palliative care. The nominator states that available analgesics and narcotics become less effective over time and is looking for guidance and alternative treatments that might improve the quality of life for cancer patients at the end of life. The nominator specifically asks if non-traditional interventions such as acupuncture, herbal remedies, and faith healing are helpful for improving quality of life.

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Populations: Terminally ill cancer patients in palliative care. Subpopulations of interest may include cancer patients with comorbid uncontrollable diabetes or hypertension.

Interventions: Acupuncture, herbal formulations, and faith healing for palliative care.

Comparators: Usual standard of care for cancer patients in palliative care, which the nominator identifies as analgesics or narcotics, to manage pain and hydration.

Outcomes: Pain control, hydration, and improved quality of life.

Key Questions from Nominator:

1. For patients with terminal cancer, what is the most appropriate palliative treatment regarding pain control and hydration?
2. Do non-traditional interventions such as acupuncture, herbal remedies, and faith healing help?

Considerations

- The topic meets EHC Program appropriateness and importance criteria. (For more information, see <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/submit-a-suggestion-for-research/how-are-research-topics-chosen/>.)

- This topic has three main interventions of interest:
 1. Acupuncture
 2. Herbal medicine
 3. Faith healing

- The topic of acupuncture for pain control in terminally ill cancer patients in palliative care was found to be addressed by an existing 2008 systematic review titled *Acupuncture is Underutilized in Hospice and Palliative Medicine*. The review examined the evidence regarding the use of acupuncture for symptoms pertinent to palliative and hospice care and included related therapeutic techniques such as auricular acupuncture, electroacupuncture, and acupressure. Very few new studies were identified since the publication of this report. Therefore, this report appears to address the nominator's question regarding the use of acupuncture.

- Very few high-quality studies have been conducted on herbal medicine or faith healing for pain control in terminally ill cancer patients in palliative care. Therefore, this topic is not feasible for a full systematic review due to the limited data available for a review at this time.