

# Acupuncture and the Opiate Crisis

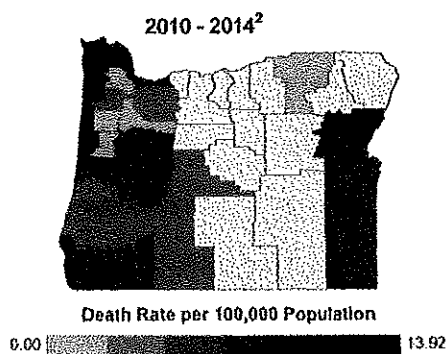
## ● PROBLEM: Too much opioid use resulting in too much opioid abuse

● Oregon has one of the highest rates of prescription opioid misuse in the nation.<sup>1,3</sup>

... More drug poisoning deaths involve prescription opioids than any other type of drug, including alcohol, methamphetamines, heroin and cocaine. An average of **three Oregonians die each week** from prescription opioid overdose.<sup>1</sup>

... **\$155 per capita** is spent on health care costs related to opioid abuse — **the highest number in the nation.**<sup>3</sup>

... More than **\$614 million** is spent on health care costs related to opioid abuse.<sup>3</sup>



## ● SOLUTION: Acupuncture is effective and safe as an alternative pain treatment

"... Associated with **significant reductions in pain intensity, improvement in functional mobility and quality of life...** current evidence supports the use of acupuncture as an alternative for traditional analgesics in patients with osteoarthritis."<sup>4</sup> (systematic review from 2014)

"... **One of the more effective physical treatments** for alleviating osteoarthritis knee pain."<sup>5</sup> (meta-analysis from 2013 analyzing 9,709 patients)

"... Current estimates of acupuncture's effects on chronic low back pain are **statistically significant and clinically important...**" and "**Acupuncture effectively relieves chronic low back pain.**"<sup>6</sup> (meta-analysis from 2005, from Annals of Internal Medicine)

"... **Superior to usual care** in treating chronic low back pain."<sup>7</sup> (systematic review from 2010)

"... for the treatment of chronic pain and is therefore a **reasonable referral option.**"<sup>8</sup> (meta-analysis from 2012 analyzing 17,922 patients)

● "Results indicate that **acupuncture provided by qualified therapists is safe, and patients benefited from the treatment.**"<sup>18</sup> (studies included were on treatment of headaches, low back pain, and osteoarthritis, analyzing treatment of 454,920 patients; from 2007)

## Acupuncture is cost-effective ...

● "According to the **WHO cost-effectiveness threshold values, acupuncture is a cost-effective treatment strategy** in patients with chronic LBP."<sup>19</sup>

● "According to this threshold, acupuncture as a **complement to standard care** for relief of **chronic LBP is highly cost-effective...**"<sup>19</sup>

● "Acupuncture with or without usual care has **acceptable cost-effectiveness.**"<sup>20</sup>

● "Acupuncture appears to be a **cost-effective intervention** for some **chronic pain conditions.**"<sup>21</sup>

## Acupuncture is low-risk ...

● The Substance Abuse Division of the Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx, New York has used auricular acupuncture to treat narcotics abuse for over 25 years. It has been **so effective for drug and alcohol detoxification** that 20 years ago **methadone was eliminated** as a treatment modality.<sup>16</sup>

## Acupuncture is safe ...

● "Overall, the incidence of **serious adverse effects from acupuncture is lower than many drugs** or other therapeutic procedures used for the same conditions for which acupuncture is used."<sup>17</sup>

● "It is clear that ... **acupuncture is relatively safe, especially when provided by properly trained individuals.**"<sup>17</sup>

## **Acupuncture reduces consumption of pain meds after surgery**

- "Analgesic consumption was significantly lower in the acupuncture group compared with the sham placebo group"<sup>19</sup>
- "In a meta-analysis of 13 RCTs of acupuncture performed before or after surgery, "the pooled data showed patients in the experimental group had **less opioid analgesics usage than those in the control group.**"<sup>10</sup>
- "Our findings indicate that certain methods of **acupuncture improved postoperative pain a day after surgery**, supporting the use of acupuncture as adjuvant therapy in treating postoperative pain."<sup>10</sup> (*systematic review and meta-analysis from 2016, PLoS One*)
- "Use of TENS [transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation] on six specific acupoints in elderly patients undergoing total hip arthroplasty is a non-invasive, non-pharmacological, and simple technique for use in **postoperative analgesia** and is associated with **reductions in opioid-related side effects.**"<sup>11</sup>
- "**Group Acu[puncture] required 37% and 31% less fentanyl** than Group Sham at 24 h and 48 h after surgery, respectively"<sup>11</sup> (*in total hip arthroplasty surgeries in elderly, 2012*)
- "The differences between the treatment and control groups in postoperative pain scores to be **clinically significant**, particularly when treatment resulted in an **earlier improvement of oral intake.**"<sup>12</sup> (*for tonsillectomies in pediatrics, 2015*)

## ● **ACUPUNCTURE also provides opioids — the natural ones ...and thus can treat opioid addiction itself**

- "**Electroacupuncture blocks pain** by activating a variety of bioactive chemicals through peripheral, spinal, and supraspinal mechanisms. **These include opioids**, which desensitize peripheral nociceptors [pain receptors] and "reduce proinflammatory cytokines peripherally and in the spinal cord..."<sup>13</sup>
- "... Analgesia induced by low-frequency [electroacupuncture] stimulation ... can be reversed by low doses of the opioid antagonist naloxone, suggesting that low-frequency stimulation can **increase the release of opioid peptides** in the CNS."<sup>14</sup>
- "The **US federal government's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (2007), the United Nations (2006),** ... as well as the US Department of Defense/Veteran's Affairs (2010) have each published best practice guidelines that address **the value of acupuncture for chemical dependency.**"<sup>15</sup>



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