

# Acupuncture Research Update

"Keep your vitality. A life without health is like a river without water." - Maxime Lagace

## Acupuncture Relieves PTSD Symptoms After Natural Disaster



In April 2019, a team of Italian researchers published a study in *Medical Acupuncture* that suggests acupuncture may be effective for reducing symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after a natural disaster. The research team looked at residents of Amatrice, Italy, where a 6.0-magnitude earthquake in 2016 left nearly 300 people dead and almost 30,000 homeless. Natural hazards, like earthquakes, that are unpredictable and wreak widespread havoc on communities, have been shown to cause psychiatric disorders in survivors, including PTSD.

The participants in this study received five weeks of acupuncture treatments starting about a month after the earthquake. Researchers used patient-reported numbers on a pain scale to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatments. Before the treatments, 68 percent of the patients reported having psychological and pain

symptoms associated with PTSD. Already after the third treatment, 54 percent of patients reported improvements in their psychological symptoms and 60 percent reported improvements in their pain symptoms. Using a statistical analysis, researchers measured a significant reduction between the initial reported psychological and pain scores and the scores after the third treatment. The researchers did not report any adverse side effects or events.

In the aftermath of natural disasters, communities are thrown into stress-provoking situations for myriad reasons, including loss of life, loss of property, loss of job, other economic losses, loss of community in the case some members move away and loss of infrastructure like schools or restaurants, among other things. Studies show individual mental health plays an important role in the success of communities rebuilding efforts after a natural disaster.

Although more research is needed to bolster the findings of this study, it suggests acupuncture can be an effective therapy for communities in the aftermath of a natural disaster. Studies show acupuncture is effective at balancing hormone levels that contribute to moderating stress levels in the body. The most significant body of research on acupuncture is in the field of acupuncture's ability to reduce physical pain. This study suggests the effects of acupuncture extend to stress and pain brought on by a natural disaster.

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