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Acupuncture Now Foundation Points to Documented Effectiveness of Acupuncture vs. Standard of Care, Urges NICE to Reconsider Recommendations for Low Back Pain with Sciatica

Leicester, U.K. – March 31, 2016 – As the [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence](#) (NICE) updates its guidelines on the diagnosis, management and treatment of low back pain with sciatica -- seeking to reverse previous recommendations of a course of acupuncture -- the [Acupuncture Now Foundation \(ANF\)](#) asserts that this new directive contradicts the data from NICE's own evidence review, which documents acupuncture as more effective than standard care for all of their key outcomes. Calling upon NICE to reconsider this decision, the ANF stresses that this fact alone supports guidelines that recommend acupuncture.

“According to NICE’s own analysis, acupuncture outperformed standard care and is much safer,” explains Mel Hopper Koppelman, MSc, executive vice president, ANF, a not-for-profit organization educating the public, healthcare providers and health policymakers about the practice of acupuncture. “Ignoring this data goes against NICE’s own procedures and is unethical.”

Koppelman also takes issue with the NICE committee’s comparisons of acupuncture to “sham acupuncture,” which is essentially pseudo-acupuncture that is used as a control in scientific studies to determine whether or not the positive effects are due to specifics of the acupuncture treatment.

“Comparisons of acupuncture to sham acupuncture have zero clinical relevance. That said, even though the studies they examined were too small to accurately determine true effect sizes, acupuncture still outperformed sham acupuncture,” continues Koppelman, negating the

contention of NICE reviewers that, while the superiority of acupuncture to sham was clinically relevant for some outcomes, it was not a significant enough improvement compared to sham for other outcomes. “There are data errors in the meta-analysis that negatively impact the outcomes. But in spite of this, many outcomes still found that acupuncture was significantly better than sham.”

Finally, Koppelman points to newly proposed NICE guidelines that recommend NSAIDs, which have a poor safety profile, with most complications occurring after four months.

“The guidelines recommend NSAIDs, which are known to increase the risk of gastrointestinal bleeding, while recommending against acupuncture,” says Koppelman, noting that the NICE analysis only looked at the short-term impact of NSAIDs. “The guidelines had very few effective recommendations to make, leaving many healthcare providers scratching their heads about what they could possibly offer their patients with low back pain. To recommend against a treatment as effective and safe as acupuncture, simply because they are uncertain how it works does both patients and providers a great and avoidable disservice.”

About the Acupuncture Now Foundation (ANF)

ANF was founded in 2014 by a diverse group of people from around the world who were concerned about common misunderstandings regarding acupuncture and wanted to help acupuncture reach its full potential. With a mission to elevate acupuncture’s impact on easing suffering and enhancing health through accurate information about its best practices, the organization seeks recognition as a leader in the collection and dissemination of unbiased and authoritative information about the practice of acupuncture. To donate or for more information, visit <https://acupuncturenowfoundation.org/about-us/>