

# Does Acupuncture Really Work?

Earlier this year, Scientific American told the world that there is [no real scientific evidence that acupuncture actually works](#). This isn't exactly new information. As Jeneen Interlandi pointed out that the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center had done extensive research on the topic. Their research showed that acupuncture produced only minimally better results than that of a placebo.

Even so, there are still patients and, perhaps more importantly, medical professionals who swear by it. A recent study about to be published in Menopause shows that electro-acupuncture produced measureable results for women suffering from breast cancer. Specifically, it helped reduce the effects of hot flashes and improved patients' ability to sleep:

[“The study showed electro-acupuncture to be comparable to, if not better than, gabapentin in helping to reduce hot flash severity and frequency and improving overall sleep quality \(including falling asleep faster and fewer sleep disruptions\).”](#)

It isn't only humans who benefit from acupuncture (however placebo-y it might be). Dr. Kara Lascola was recently featured on FarmandDairy.com for her success using acupuncture to comfort horses:

[“I mainly use acupuncture to help manage chronic pain associated with musculoskeletal problems, such as back injuries, although it can also be used in management for other conditions such as laminitis or neuropathies,” she said.](#)

While it does take a few treatments for the acupuncture to have any real effect, said Lascola, it does truly seem to work.

And, of course, we cannot discount the very real and biologically based placebo effect. The placebo effect is so strong that some patients still report symptom relief—even when they know they are taking a placebo and not a real medication. The Wall Street Journal explored this idea:

[“Brain-imaging studies have shown that during placebo, people have an activation of the reward system” in the brain, says Asya Rolls, an assistant professor at the Technion, Israel Institute of Technology, and senior researcher on the study in Nature Medicine.](#)

Scientifically speaking, the effects of acupuncture are minimal. There has not, however, been any evidence that undergoing this treatment is harmful. Particularly for patients focused on seeking comfort and pain relief, acupuncture can provide very real (or real feeling) results. What it is important for readers to understand is that they should not attempt to use

acupuncture in place of medicinal treatments. While it can often provide comfort and pain relief, it cannot provide a cure.