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**Outcomes of a Clinical Trial Shamanic Treatment for Temporomandibular Joint Disorders**

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**Background:** Temporomandibular joint disorder (TMD) is chronic, recurrent, non-progressive pain condition affecting the jaw and face. Patients least likely to respond to allopathic treatment are those with the most marked biological responsiveness to external stressors and concomitant emotional and psychosocial difficulties. These characteristics describe individuals who are "dispirited" and may benefit from shamanic healing, an ancient form of spiritual healing.

**Methods:** Participants were randomized to one of four shamanic practitioners and attended five shamanic healing sessions. Self-reported pain and disability were recorded at baseline and each treatment visit, and at one, three, six, and nine-month follow-ups. Participants were also clinically evaluated at baseline and end of treatment. In-depth interviews, part of our mixed methods design, were conducted at baseline and end of treatment to evaluate acceptability and non-clinical changes associated with treatment.

**Results:** Change from baseline to post-treatment in diagnosis of TMD by RDC exam and participant self-ratings on the "usual" pain, "worst" pain, and functional impact of TMD subscales of the RDC Axis II Pain Related Disability and Psychological Status Scale. This study demonstrated the feasibility and acceptability of clinical trials of shamanic healing. Further, efficacy results from baseline to one month after treatment showed significant improvement in usual pain ( $p < .0001$ ), worst pain ( $p < .0001$ ), and functional impairment ( $p = .0052$ ).

**Conclusions:** Traditional systems of healing, such as shamanism, may not readily lend themselves to conventional research methods, yet studying their effectiveness is especially germane in the case of chronic conditions (such as TMD) that involve an emotional component that eludes allopathic treatment regimes.