

POSTER ABSTRACTS

15th Annual HMO Research Network Conference
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11:30 am–Noon & 1:30–2:00 pm
Monday, April 27th • Lobby

PS1 – 12

Acceptability of Group Acupuncture Clinics at a Health Maintenance Organization

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Background: This project aims to assess whether group clinics represent an appropriate and viable mechanism for delivering acupuncture services in a conventional managed care setting.

Methods: We are conducting a qualitative analysis with adult patients complaining of back or neck pain who have recently received acupuncture services at Kaiser Permanente Northwest. About half of these patients are receiving acupuncture in a group setting. During group acupuncture sessions, about 4-6 patients are treated at one time by a single practitioner. During treatments, patients are seated in reclining chairs in a shared treatment room. Distal acupoints are used so that patients do not need to remove clothing. Patients are asked about satisfaction with their clinician and care received, as well as level of overall clinical improvement. We also ask participants to comment on the advantages and disadvantages of the group clinic setting, and to offer suggestions for improvement.

Analysis: Data analysis involves three steps. First, we use aggregate respondent answers to each interview question to generate a list of response themes for each question. Second, we summarize each respondent's answers, to highlight individuals' reactions to group acupuncture. We then return to the data to identify overarching themes or new themes that were not addressed in the first two efforts.

Results: We have conducted fourteen out of an anticipated fifty telephone interviews. Preliminary analysis of patient responses revealed the following themes: both groups reported improvements in quality of life and pain control, but expressed concerns about appointment availability. Patients receiving group acupuncture reported that they were generally satisfied with their care. Patient-reported advantages of group acupuncture include greater flexibility in length of time of appointment, and more time with the clinician. Disadvantages include perceived lack of privacy. In contrast, participants attending individual acupuncture sessions stated strong preferences for remaining in individual sessions, and were unable to imagine how group care could be feasible.

Conclusions: We conclude that, despite misgivings expressed by patients who have not experienced group acupuncture, those who did participate in the group sessions were generally satisfied and reported clinical improvement.