

Palliative Care Acupuncture Program

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Contents

Introduction	2
About Us	3
About the Program	4
The Need for Integrative Treatment Strategies in Chronic Pain	5
Why Acupuncture?	6
Program Results	8
Patient Utilization	8
Patient Testimonials	12
Feedback from Acupuncture Interns	18
Contact Us	21

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Introduction

The Palliative Care Acupuncture Program at Montefiore Medical Center was launched as a pilot in March 2006 to provide free acupuncture treatments to low-income people living with chronic pain. The program was part of the Palliative Care Service's Supportive Care Program, offering a range of supportive, complementary care and educational services to improve the quality of life of people living with chronic pain and those at the end of life.

The Acupuncture Program was introduced for patients of our outpatient pain clinic through a unique collaboration with the Swedish Institute College of Health Sciences, a licensed acupuncture training institute. This resource efficient strategy enabled us to offer acupuncture at no cost to patients, while providing a unique supervised internship for advanced acupuncture interns.

In May 2007, through the generous support of the Balm Foundation, we introduced a second acupuncture clinic focusing on care for people living with HIV/AIDS and pain. In total, 151 patients received ongoing weekly acupuncture as a complement to their regular medical care.

Many patients experience pain, depression and anxiety unresolved by standard medicine, yet are unable to access the range of therapeutic services available to higher income populations. Our program was able to address this gap by offering acupuncture free of charge at one of Montefiore's community clinics, a setting that is accessible, familiar and trusted by patients.

As the personal testimonials in this collection reveal, participant feedback has been exceptionally positive. Patients report significant physical and psychological benefits, as well as high levels of satisfaction with the program itself. They also convey that the program allowed them rare and much appreciated moments of comfort and relief, and provided new hope for alleviating their pain.



About Us

Montefiore Medical Center, the university hospital for Albert Einstein College of Medicine, is a leading healthcare resource for low-income and minority residents of the Bronx, one of the most economically, medically and socially disenfranchised communities in the nation.

Almost half of patients served by Montefiore identify as Latino and one third as African American. According to the 2000 census, 30 to 45 percent of Bronx families and over 40 percent of children under 18 live below the poverty level. Prevalence rates for poverty-related diseases such as substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and mortality from HIV are over 50 percent higher than the citywide average. Over half the population is uninsured or on Medicaid. Social problems such as violence, crime and incarceration are pandemic.

Montefiore Palliative Care Service (PCARE)

Launched in 2000, PCARE provides state-of-the-art, multidisciplinary care to minimize symptom distress for people who have serious illnesses that are not responding to curative treatment. PCARE provides expertise in pain and symptom management, advance care planning and psychosocial support to over 1,800 hospitalized patients each year through a team of fellowship-trained doctors, nurse practitioners, medical social workers, and a psychiatrist. PCARE is a division of the Montefiore and Einstein Department of Family and Social Medicine.

PCARE provides consultative pain management services to approximately 400 people on an outpatient basis each year. Patients come to PCARE's Outpatient Pain Clinic for pain stemming from a variety of complex and chronic conditions



including degenerative musculoskeletal disorders, chronic progressive neurological illnesses, multiple sclerosis, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, and HIV. Along with physical illness, over half of patients report psychological symptoms such as depression and anxiety.

Montefiore Center for Positive Living/ Infectious Disease Clinic (ID Clinic)

The ID Clinic is a nationally-recognized, model HIV/AIDS primary care clinic, providing multispecialty outpatient HIV primary care to one of the largest and most diverse HIV-positive patient populations in the nation. The clinic serves approximately 2,700 adults each year through an integrated team of over 45 healthcare professionals including physicians, nurse practitioners, psychiatrists, psychologists, gynecologists, obstetricians, dermatologists, pain specialists, hepatitis C and diabetes specialists, social workers, nurses, and dietitians. Ninety-one percent of patients have incomes below the federal poverty level.

The ID Clinic is part of the Montefiore AIDS Center, which also includes an inpatient service, a research unit, an on-site outpatient specialty pharmacy, HIV testing and counseling, and a renowned HIV/AIDS quality of care program.

About the Program

PCARE launched the Acupuncture Program in March 2006 in collaboration with the Swedish Institute College of Health Sciences' Acupuncture Clinical Internship Program.

Each semester, six to seven advanced student interns provided free acupuncture to patients in exchange for the use of our site as a clinical practice setting. Interns were directly supervised by licensed clinical faculty from the Swedish Institute, with Montefiore oversight. In total, 28 students completed their internship at Montefiore.

One of the keys to our program's success was that it combined the resources of two institutions in a cost-effective manner that benefitted all involved. We were able to offer acupuncture at no cost to our patients. In turn, interns gained experience working with patients with complex medical profiles who are unlikely to be able to gain access to these services otherwise. Interns repeatedly stated that our patient population is highly distinct from the patients they are exposed to in their Manhattan school clinic, making our program an important learning experience.

Three interns worked at the PCARE Pain Clinic one morning a week under the direct supervision of a licensed clinical acupuncturist. Each intern treated one patient per hour in a private treatment room, for a total of twelve patients per week. The second group of interns worked at the Montefiore ID Clinic one afternoon each week, providing care for people with HIV/AIDS and pain.

Patients were referred to the program by their PCARE or ID Clinic physician or nurse practitioner according to a series of inclusion and exclusion

criteria. The program communicated with each referred patient to provide information and answer questions about receiving acupuncture. Participants were offered a 6-week block of treatments—a standard number used in medical settings for lasting clinical effects—with the option of continuing for additional treatment blocks.

Our program offered patients a high quality treatment experience, centered on personal, focused attention and care. Patients were scheduled with the same acupuncturist each week to develop an ongoing relationship and for continuity of care. Each session, patients spent a full hour with their acupuncturist in a private treatment room—a marked divergence from the often rushed pace of standard healthcare. The acupuncturist investigated in detail how the patient was feeling and any changes in health or symptoms since the last appointment. Patients then received treatments tailored to their individual health needs and had the opportunity to rest for as long as 15–20 minutes with the acupuncture needles.

Patients were referred for acupuncture for a variety of pain conditions (see *Program Results*, page 8 for more details). The acupuncture intake process also includes specific questions on emotions, mood and health behaviors. Acupuncture thus often served as a gateway to address other important concerns in patients' lives such as depression, anxiety and sleeping difficulties.

The Need for Integrative Treatment Strategies in Chronic Pain

Chronic pain, the number one cause of disability in the United States, is a complex sensory and emotional experience that can affect all aspects of a person's life—physical, psychological, emotional, and social (1). People living with pain routinely experience limitation of personal, social and work activities, a sense of demoralization and powerlessness, preoccupation with pain, depression and anxiety, and increased dependence on healthcare services (2).

Socioeconomic disadvantage is a predictor of disabling pain and pain is more prevalent among minorities, who are more likely to live in poor communities (3). It is also known that people with considerable past or present life stress often perceive chronic pain as unmanageable because it amplifies the baseline stress already in existence (4). Indeed, we find that our patients' experience of pain is often further exacerbated by the effects of living in an impoverished community. Patients may lack social support, with family networks strained by longstanding poverty, mental health issues or substance abuse. Many patients themselves have struggled with mental illness or substance abuse, and lack coping skills. Some have also experienced significant trauma in their lives.

Despite advances in medical knowledge, diagnostic procedures and treatments, no one current treatment provides consistent and permanent relief for everyone with pain. Medications are often essential to alleviate pain, but 1) they address only the physical aspects of pain, 2) they often produce troubling side effects, 3) they are sometimes ineffective, leading patients to request increasingly larger doses of potentially addictive medications or



to feel stranded without options to manage their pain, and 4) they may have significant interactions with other medications, markedly reducing quality of life.

It is widely recognized that optimal treatment of chronic pain involves a multidisciplinary, integrative approach—combining multiple healthcare strategies to address the individual's total experience of living with pain, at different stages of healing. This might include standard treatments such as medications and physical therapy, along with approaches such as counseling, support groups, acupuncture, massage therapy, chiropractic, relaxation techniques, gentle yoga or other movement therapies, and good nutrition.

See page 20 of this document for citations on this page.

Why Acupuncture?

Acupuncture has been used for thousands of years to treat pain and other health conditions and to increase overall health. PCARE introduced acupuncture because of its recognized effects on decreasing pain, reducing stress and providing a deep sense of relaxation.

Research studies indicate that acupuncture is effective in relieving chronic pain including neck pain (1,2), low back pain (3, 4), knee or hip pain (5, 6), peripheral joint pain (7), and painful diabetic neuropathy (8). Acupuncture has had positive results in treating symptoms of HIV/AIDS such as peripheral neuropathy (9) and diarrhea (10), and can be helpful in smoking cessation*(11) and the treatment of drug addiction (12, 13, 14). Studies also suggest benefits for such mental health issues as depression and anxiety (15, 16, 17), as well as to improve the quality of sleep (18, 19). Acupuncture is considered a safe treatment method, with a lower risk of adverse side effects than with many standard drug treatments (20).

When treating chronic pain, interventions that respond with sensitivity to people's needs, promote the mastery of skills to cope with pain, and reinforce the potential for healing are essential. Acupuncture treats the whole person, evaluating physical symptoms along with diet, lifestyle, emotions, and mood to improve health and well being on all levels. Acupuncturists also encourage a balanced diet and lifestyle, teach special techniques for self-care, and champion the individual's capacity for self-knowledge and healing.

Despite these benefits, most people in low-income neighborhoods cannot afford acupuncture or other integrative treatments because of a lack of insurance coverage, high out of pocket fees and

“Acupuncture treats the whole person, evaluating physical symptoms along with diet, lifestyle, emotions, and mood to improve health and well being on all levels.”

See page 20 of this document for citations on this page.



a simple lack of local services. Living in resource-poor neighborhoods in the Bronx, many patients depend on programs such as ours for this type of healing therapy.

It is sometimes assumed that people living in low-income communities would not be interested in receiving integrative medicine. While planning our acupuncture clinic, the question in fact arose whether our patient population would even consider acupuncture at all. Participant feedback on their experiences with our acupuncture clinic has shown that patients are decidedly interested and benefit significantly. Many participants chose to return for additional treatment blocks, and we consistently received new referrals for people who were eager to try acupuncture for the first time.

People with chronic pain often already face limitations, a sense of powerlessness and a reduction of choices by virtue of their state of health. We believe that healthcare should be an arena that truly supports patients and encourages them to explore options in care as a means to improve health, enhance self-efficacy and create change in their lives. Our acupuncture program was successful as a meaningful way to provide patients with expanded choices in healing through an effective modality that promotes individualized and empowered care.

Program Results

Patient Utilization

Patient Demographics

A total of 151 patients received acupuncture through the Acupuncture Program: 67 in the Pain Clinic and 84 in the ID Clinic. In both clinics, the majority of participants were women and identified as Latino or African American. Participants' ages were also similar, with a median age of 56 in the Pain Clinic and 50 in the ID Clinic. These

demographic findings are consistent with general trends in chronic pain. Studies show the majority of people living with chronic pain are women between the ages of 45–64 (1). Women have been found to be at greater risk for many pain conditions and tend to have higher pain sensitivity than men (2).

	GENDER		ETHNICITY			AGE		
	Female	Latino	African American	White	South East Asian	Range	Median	60% Grouping
Pain Clinic	81%	39%	33%	27%	1%	19–86	56	45–65
ID Clinic	63%	60%	27%	12%	1%	25–86	50	45–60

“The program had high compliance, with 70% of Pain Clinic participants completing the minimum 4 treatments.”

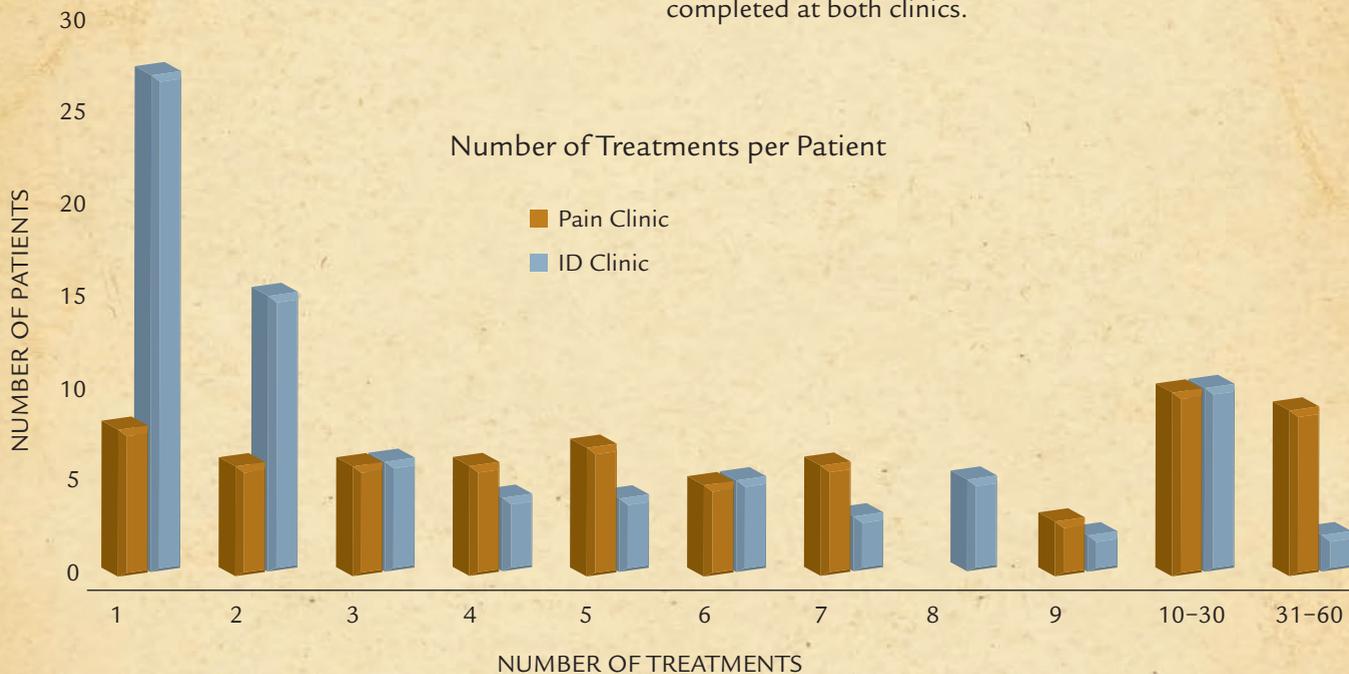
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Frequency of Attendance

A total of 749 acupuncture treatments were administered in the Pain Clinic from March 2006–December 2008. We had high levels of compliance, with 70 percent of participants completing at least 4 treatments, which was the minimum requirement of the program. Fifty-one percent completed at least 6 treatments, the minimum expectation for clinical results, with 30 percent completing between 10 and 60 treatments. Treatments were offered in sessions, each of which consisted of 6 treatments. Fifty-seven percent of participants chose to return for more than one session, attending between two and 12 sessions.

In the ID Clinic, a total of 485 treatments were administered from May 2007–April 2009. Forty-two percent of participants completed at least four treatments. Thirty-two percent completed at least six treatments, with 14 percent completing between 10 and 53 treatments. Forty-four percent of patients chose to return for more than one session, attending between two and 10 sessions. That patients in the ID clinic participated less regularly than patients in the Pain Clinic is consistent with the lower rate of attendance for medical care in the ID Clinic in general.

The figure below shows the number of treatments completed at both clinics.

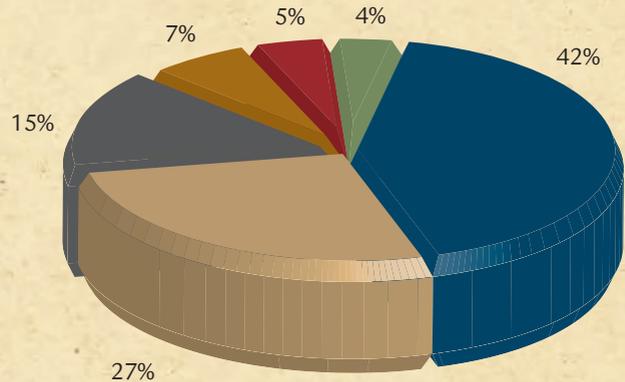


Reasons for Referral

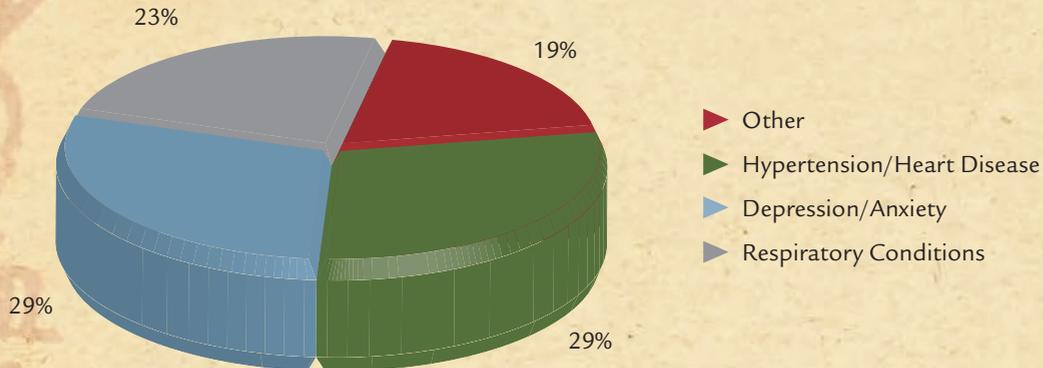
In the Pain Clinic, the majority of patients were referred for back pain/degenerative disc disease or arthritis. The most common comorbidities indicated on the referral were depression/anxiety and hypertension/heart disease, followed by respiratory conditions.

Pain Clinic—Reasons for Referral (n=59)

- ▶ Back Pain/Degenerative Disc Disease
- ▶ Arthritis
- ▶ Musculoskeletal Pain
- ▶ Neuropathic Pain
- ▶ Other
- ▶ Cancer-Related Pain

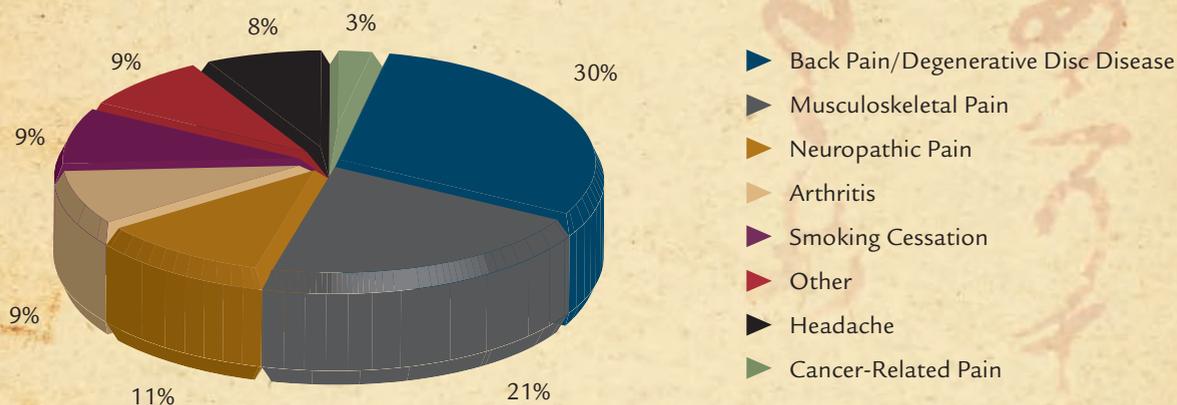


Pain Clinic—Comorbidities Indicated (n=21)

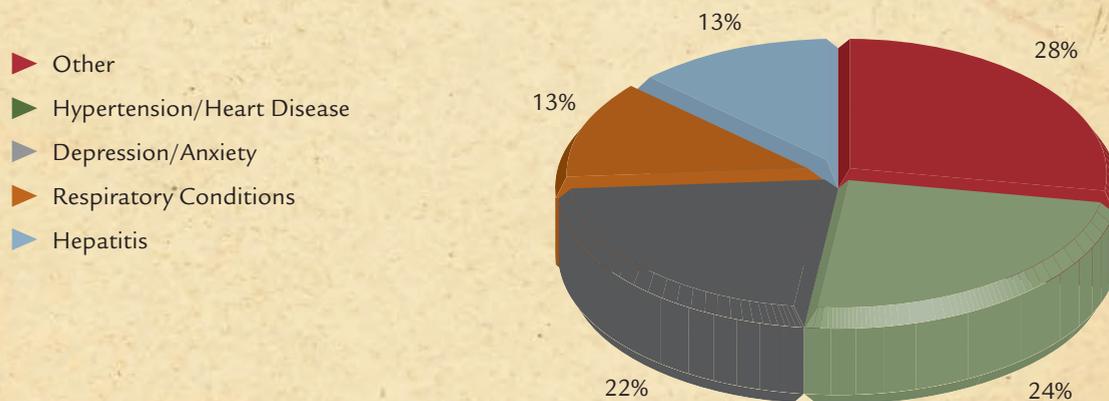


The majority of patients in the ID Clinic were referred for back pain/degenerative disc disease or musculoskeletal pain, followed by neuropathic pain. The most frequent comorbidities indicated were hypertension/heart disease, hepatitis and respiratory conditions, followed by depression/anxiety. Ninety percent of patients treated for acupuncture in the ID Clinic were HIV positive.

ID Clinic—Reasons for Referral (n=72)



ID Clinic—Comorbidities Indicated (n=50)



Program Results

Feedback from Patients

Patients have reported high levels of satisfaction with the Acupuncture Program, especially the quality of services and staff. They describe improvements in pain, mood and sleep following their acupuncture experience. On an emotional level, patients explain that acupuncture helped them feel less depressed and anxious, better able to cope, and more confident in their ability to handle what are often profound life challenges. They convey that the program allowed them rare and much appreciated moments of comfort and relief, and provided new hope for alleviating their pain and health complaints.

“Your program has made me feel hope that I won’t have to live with this pain forever.”

Patient Testimonials

Robin*

I’ve been receiving acupuncture for about a year and half now, and I have to say it has helped my severe back pain and also improved my mood. I have back pain which is chronic and a deteriorating condition. I find that when the clinic is not in operation, my back deteriorates and my mood also deteriorates. My experience has been that every time I start acupuncture again, I have marked improvement in my pain and my mood.

When my pain first started I had to take massive doses of Ibuprofen, Celebrex and another medication, which I’ve stopped taking since starting acupuncture. Acupuncture definitely had

a relationship to my being able to stop taking the medications. I just received a treatment and the difference in how I feel now, both physically and emotionally, versus when I came in is a marked improvement.

My first encounter was so amazing. The intern said ‘you’re hot’ and I said ‘what does that mean?’ She said ‘you’re holding emotion and we need to release the emotions from your body.’ And she told me that I may experience crying and explained how the body releases things through the bodily fluid. Three hours after the intervention, I was sitting on a bench and just burst into tears. It wasn’t tears that emanated from a feeling state of sadness. It just poured out and that went on for about a week. And I knew

**All names have been changed to respect privacy.*

what was going on because it had been explained to me. But the fact that I had such a quick reaction and my body responded so to the intervention, I said this is a miracle, this stuff is amazing. So that kind of just hooked me, and then the fact that I see such immediate results—and I'm fortunate that my body does respond so well to this, without pills—it's the body healing itself, which is I think the best way to approach anything if one can.

Based on this experience, I plan to avail myself of acupuncture for the rest of my life. This has been a wonderful experience, truly. I'm very glad my physician referred me, I truly am.

Carole

My experience [with acupuncture] is a very good one and I will never forget it. When I came here I was all messed up—I mean mentally, physically and everything. I have a young grandson who has cancer and when I came in everything was just crazy with him, so it made me crazy. I've been coming for twelve weeks and I've been feeling so much better in the last four or five visits. Each time I come it gets better and better.

The staff here is wonderful. Everybody has treated me very good from the first day. I felt so at home, so relaxed, I could just speak my mind. And when I leave here I feel like a million dollars. If I should ever need to come back I will definitely come because it's one of the best experiences I've had dealing with hospitals and sickness. I would recommend it to anybody. Since I've been coming I'm more relaxed and see things differently and feel differently, so I feel like I could take on the world now. The sky is the limit. So thank you. So much.



Deborah

Acupuncture is helping me when it comes to sleeping. I used to be up every hour, even with sleeping pills. I'd take a sleeping pill, sleep for an hour and get up. Now I get to sleep most of the night. Say I get up at 4am, I'll take one sleeping pill and sleep until 9. That is a big improvement.

This is my eighth time coming. The people are absolutely wonderful. They explain things as they do them and answer any questions I have. Overall it's definitely been a positive experience. I would even want to have it more often.

Eduardo

My experience with the acupuncture is very good. It's the first time that I take acupuncture and it's helping me a lot. I was interested in having acupuncture mostly for my pain. Before I started taking acupuncture, it was very hard for me to walk because of the pain in my legs. I think I'm having a good treatment because my pain is getting much better. I talked to [the acupuncturist] and I've seen many changes since I started taking acupuncture.

Before acupuncture I just took medication, pills, but it doesn't work. I decided to try acupuncture because I think it's something natural. Try to do things natural—I think it's better than a lot of medications for your body. I think I'm going to use acupuncture for everything I want to treat.



Clara

This was my first experience with acupuncture. I was looking for relief and I think I found it. It

helped, especially with my hands and my neck—I was able to turn my head more. Then they started working on my back and it was feeling better. I had a lot of problems and my body was really responding.

Before acupuncture, my pain wasn't going away and I was really getting frustrated and it was making my condition worse. I really need help because my hands are dying, they're atrophying. But the acupuncture I felt was doing something for me. I actually went down on the opioids... I felt the

pain was a little better. Not only that, but in my own heart I was able to fight. I had lost the will to fight until I got acupuncture. I think the talking to me while they were working with me gave me hope. Medicine without hope—I don't care how much medicine you do, if you lost hope, it's not going to help. But when I was getting the acupuncture, the acupuncturist talked to me the whole time and I could feel that as he was talking it didn't hurt and my body starting responding to the touch. Then I understood what the acupuncture meant.



Nilda

This is my third time coming and I never took acupuncture before. The first time I had acupuncture, before that I couldn't sleep, but since the first day I took [acupuncture] it's working for me, so I'm proud I'm taking it. Before I couldn't sleep the whole night but ever since I've been taking acupuncture I've been able to sleep at night.

If you lose hope, your body is going to fall, your mind just stops responding without hope—you know, what are you doing all this for? But when I was getting acupuncture I was feeling hope. I'm a fighter, but I was giving up. With all the drugs in you, and I hate drugs. That still bothers me when I hear opioids. It is a serious medication. And then they wanted to put me on methadone. I fought against it. I saw too many people growing up nodding out. I saw a lot of strong men dying off those drugs. And so did I want it in my body? No. People say this is different. It's no different when you're thinking about what you saw, even if now it's legitimate.

Oh my goodness. I really did have a good experience with the acupuncture clinic. I met wonderful people that I was able to put my trust in, because as I said I lost trust... I had a lot of faith in the first [acupuncturist]. He was very gentle. I'm very fortunate that I got a chance to meet everyone in the acupuncture [clinic] and to learn what it's about.

I don't think "old" but I am a senior citizen. Where do I go now? Where do I go? Acupuncture gave me hope.

I always have severe pains but with this acupuncture the pain is not as strong as before. I notice because I used to take so many pills. OxyContin in the morning, OxyContin in the middle, OxyContin at night. But with this, I'm not taking the one in the middle, just in the morning and at night. [My pain is] not totally gone because what I have is not going to go away completely, but with acupuncture—like I had a headache this morning and right now [after the acupuncture treatment] it disappeared. It's working!

I've always wanted to try [acupuncture]. The other day I asked my doctor, he said 'I was thinking about that. I don't know what else to give you for the pain. The only thing is acupuncture, try it.' So he was the one that brought me to acupuncture. I'm happy he did. He told me about acupuncture. And it worked.

“I had lost the will to fight until I got acupuncture.”

Janet

This is my second round of acupuncture. When I started I had a lot of pain. I have some pain in my leg, but my groin and my lower back are where it hurts a lot. It's not so bad now. It's coming along and I'm hoping that [the acupuncture] will eliminate the rest of the pain. It's not as much pain as I had when I first started so I'm hoping that this other cycle will help me.

I think [the acupuncture has] helped a lot. I feel really good after I come, and so I started going shopping [right afterwards], but the therapist said not to do that, to go home and rest. Soak in the tub with Epsom salts. And I found that to be very helpful. Before I started coming I didn't go anywhere too much because of the pain when I walk. And then when I started I was taking a cab here. It has subsided so that I'm able to come by bus. I have to take two buses. So that shows me that it's helping. I'm not spending a lot of car fare anymore.

I'd never had acupuncture before but my doctor suggested it and I told her that I was willing to try it. I trusted her. At first when I came I was afraid because I'm scared of needles. But the acupuncturists are very nice. They really made me feel at ease and that's why I was willing to keep coming back.

They should have acupuncture available all the time. I'm glad they got it, not only for me but for other patients who really need it. They should keep it because a lot of people really need acupuncture. They really do and they're not getting it. I'm just glad I can get it.

James

Well, basically acupuncture has been a lifesaver to me so far because I've been going through a lot of pain. I heard so much about the acupuncture. It's been a good experience for me and it's helped my back a great deal. Especially the lady who's taking caring of me, she's shown me many things about why [I have] pain and how I can relieve it. Wonderful staff—they're nice, they take time to explain to you how to take care of your body and avoid the pressure I'm going through.

The way they're training these [acupuncturists] is unbelievable. They're very courteous. They ask you before they do anything. They try to give you confidence and put you at relief. They explain to you, really explain to you what it's all about, don't look for miracles right away because you've been going through this pain for a while. These things don't happen overnight.





“I can face some of these obstacles in a new way...”

I have chronic back pain and the acupuncture gave me a lot of hope. I was on a dialysis machine for about seven and a half years, and being in those chairs, I was giving up on it. Three years ago I got a kidney, but during that course I believe my back went through hell and taking the pills and all that sort of stuff really didn't help me, and I never did want to take too much pills anyway. So when I got the opportunity for the acupuncture I jumped at it. It's been working out quite well. I believe that acupuncture would be a little more pushed up if people realize it does help you. Like today I was a little upset over something and the acupuncture relaxed me and my back feels much better now.

The acupuncture has definitely helped me physically. When I leave here I have to do many things, but I have confidence because I just got the acupuncture.

I know I can manage to do this and do that without thinking about the pain. I can face some of these obstacles in a new way these days. And believe me it's very hard to have pains in your body and back. You don't have to look bad to feel bad...

I say you should keep it up. If you can encourage other people like yourself that's trying to keep it going, and that attitude, taking time and asking people. Because believe it or not there are so many people that are stressed out and in pain. And the point is that the ones that can afford it get it but the ones that barely can can't. I know that acupuncture definitely will help anybody that goes with it and sticks with it. I hope people realize they should have acupuncture brought to the people more, realize how can it help you. What you're doing is very grand. Don't give up on it.

Program Results

Feedback from Acupuncture Interns

As their testimonials reveal, program interns reported significant personal and professional growth from their work at Montefiore, including increased awareness of the challenges facing our patient population, enhanced sensitivity to the multifaceted nature of chronic pain and of HIV, and a greater level of professionalism. Interns also draw attention to the significant, sometimes astonishing, effects the acupuncture treatments had on patients' physical health and psychological well being.

Acupuncture Intern Testimonials

Sarah*

What I value most about my experience in the Bronx are the daily one-on-one sessions with patients. I've seen patients respond dramatically well to their acupuncture treatments. One patient had debilitating pain that was gone when she stood up after her first treatment, and [the pain] hasn't returned. Another patient suffered from an asthma attack which stopped within a few minutes of needle placement, with her pulse and respiration also returning to normal rates. I believe that the gentle mind/body/spirit approach that acupuncture offers is the chief reason these patients respond so quickly and so well.

I also feel that this internship helped me develop my knowledge and skills in treating patients. I felt challenged as an acupuncturist in a positive way to come up with treatments that address the patient's whole self, especially as many patients have complex physical and psychological health conditions. I believe I grew in my sensitivity and my ability to connect with many different types of people. It has been a great learning experience and very rewarding.

Anne

I applied for this internship because I wanted to experience what working in a hospital setting would be like and to work with patients who might otherwise not have access to acupuncture. I specifically wanted to work with patients with chronic pain who have not had success with pain relief despite medical interventions.

I greatly enjoyed my internship. I was able to work with patients who are on many medications and to deal with the complexity of diagnosis and treatment from a Chinese medical point of view. The one commonality I observed among all the patients was the presence of significant mental or emotional distress. I learned about the complexity of issues—physical ailments, mental/psychological difficulties and even spiritual issues patients were struggling with. It was both humbling and gratifying to work with people who are coming to acupuncture not because of some “new age” desire but because they are near their wit's end.

**All names have been changed to respect privacy.*

I like the idea of working in collaboration with other healthcare practitioners who are also treating the same patients. For this reason, I especially appreciated learning the dynamics of working with patients as part of an integrated team of healthcare providers. I truly feel I grew as a person as well as an acupuncturist/healer.

Dana

I applied for this internship to work with clients with HIV/AIDS, some of whom also deal with the challenges of financial poverty, mental illness and disability. I feel I really gained from this experience. I gained confidence in my skills as a new acupuncturist. I had the privilege of working with patients coping with multiple struggles, and was able to help them on the mind/body/spirit levels. I was also able to use my Spanish each clinical day, which was very meaningful for me.

There are so many special experiences and moments I would like to share involving my work with the patients. I worked with a woman who is disabled as a result of a medical accident several years ago. She experienced extreme pain in both legs. After the first session her pain was significantly better, and after the third she began getting movement back in both legs. She and her family expressed happiness and a sense of hope for a possible full recovery one day.



Another patient, an elderly woman with a diagnosis of fibromyalgia, had a complaint of severe and debilitating hip and groin pain. She only had slight and temporary improvement after the first two sessions, and it was hard for her to believe that she would ever have significant relief, though I explained it sometimes takes time. She felt depressed and wept in the office. The day of her third appointment she came into the examination room wearing a bright red blouse, without the use of her cane, and with a big smile on her face. She embraced me and told me she felt much better.

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For More Information

Many resources are available to learn more about acupuncture and other integrative modalities that can help with chronic pain. The following websites are recommended for high quality information.

Get the Facts: Acupuncture

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, National Institutes of Health

<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/acupuncture>

Basic information on acupuncture, including its use for pain, what to expect from a treatment, and side effects and risks.

New Approaches to Chronic Disease— Chronic Pain

Continuum Center for Health & Healing, Beth Israel Medical Center

www.healingchronicdisease.org

This NIH-funded, multimedia patient education website offers in-depth, evidence-based information, resources and research summaries, and unique online exercises to help people manage Chronic Pain, Heart Disease and Diabetes in an integrative way. (English and Spanish)

Taking Charge of Your Health

University of Minnesota

<http://takingcharge.csh.umn.edu>

“Explore Complementary Therapies” offers extensive information on many healing practices. “Navigate the Health Care System” provides information and tools to help you take charge of your healthcare. “Create a Healthy Lifestyle” features an online program to help you improve your physical, mental, social, and spiritual health.

Contact Us

To learn more about the Montefiore Palliative Care Service please call (718) 920-6378 or contact Ronit Fallek, Director, Supportive Care Program, at (718) 920-6576 or rfallek@montefiore.org.

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